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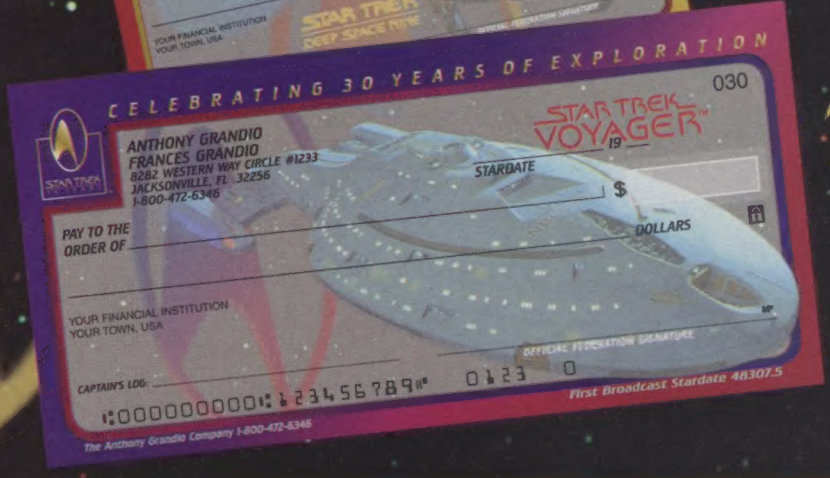

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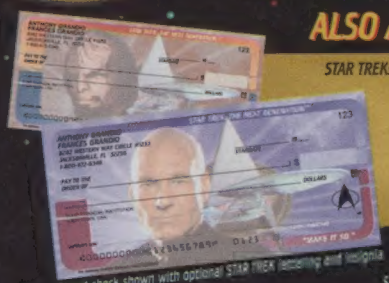

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S I D E

Shue In

Academy Award nominee Elisabeth Shue talks about her journey from *Leaving Las Vegas*' lady of the night to Val Kilmer's sophisticated leading lady in *The Saint*.

The List

You're used to *CINESCAPE* giving you the lowdown on the best current sci-fi: Now we reveal the most influential futuristic fare of all time.

Fly Girl

The famous *Airport* series of the '70s may be history, but the subgenre it created is still going strong. In the wake of films like *Passenger 57* and *Executive Decision* comes *Turbulence*, in which Mrs. Jim Carrey, Lauren Holly, must fend off a psychotic Ray Liotta.

Lava Come Back

Twister may not have been a walk in the park, but in *Volcano*, Nature unleashes a deadly molten mess on the City of Angels, and only Tommy Lee Jones can rein in the rampant lava.

Killers from Outer Space

Finding extras who could play vamps in *Mars Attacks!* (below) was no problem, but creating the pesky Martians was a serious challenge to FX pros.

Bon Voyager

Kate Mulgrew admits that there have been a few bumpy moments in *Star Trek: Voyager*'s first couple of seasons, but the veteran television and stage actress feels the fledgling syndicated series has finally hit its stride.

DEPARTMENTS

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CINESC

FROM THE EDITOR

Surveys, data-crunching computers, statistical checks and balances, rigorous outside review. That's how *U.S. News & World Report* determines where schools fall in its annual guide to the nation's best colleges and universities. And here at *CINESCAPE*, we set no less of a standard for ourselves when we decided to identify an even more important national resource, the most influential science fiction films of all time.

Unfortunately, we all became journalists because long division was a mystery to us, so we soon abandoned the *U.S. News* example. Our methodology, by contrast, was to be more straightforward, if no less demanding: We watched a bunch of movies, argued about them, and then took a vote.

As it turned out, however, it wasn't such a good idea to let the staff decide. Despite a recount conducted by the company's controller, *Howard the Duck* and *The Reluctant Astronaut* somehow made the top 10—and we knew that if management ever got wind of the results, we'd be lining up for mandatory drug tests again. (The last time, our production manager, Todd, didn't quite get the concept: He took twice as long as the rest of us, and when he finally returned to his work station, he was crowing about how there was going to be a hundred little Todds running around somewhere out there.)

Ultimately, we decided to cast our net beyond the boundaries of our little oasis here. We turned to industry pros (such as Harlan Ellison, John Carpenter and J. Michael Straczynski), film historians (such as Leo Braudy) and the typical moviegoer on the street (thanks Mom!). Slowly, a consensus began to form. And—ye Gods!—nothing from Don Knotts' *oeuvre* made the cut.

—Douglas Perry

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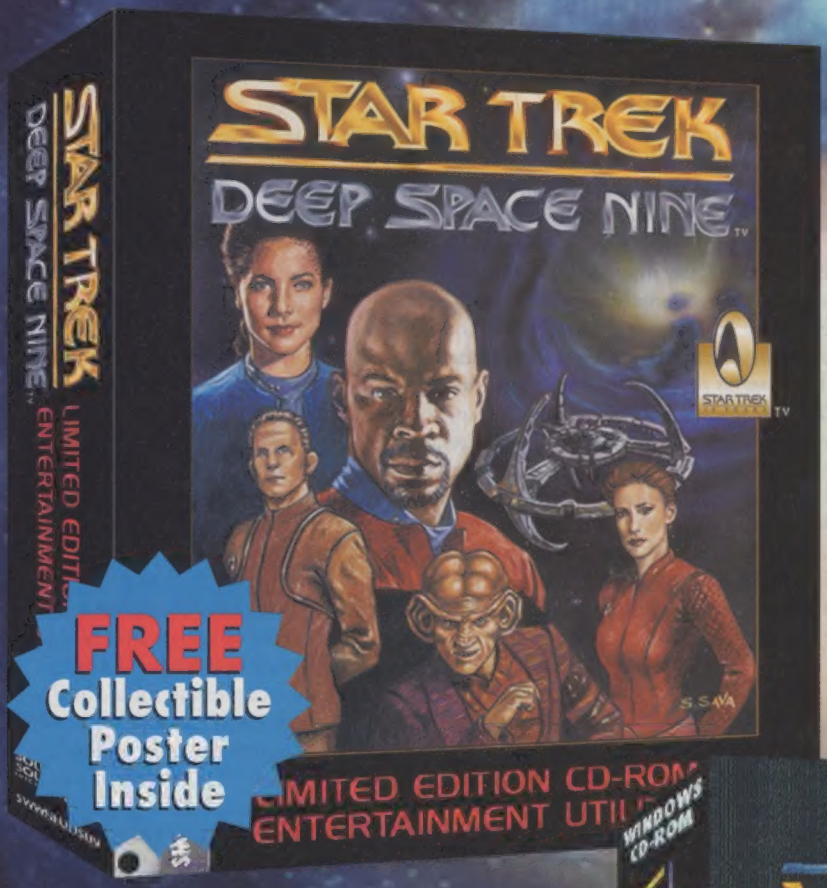

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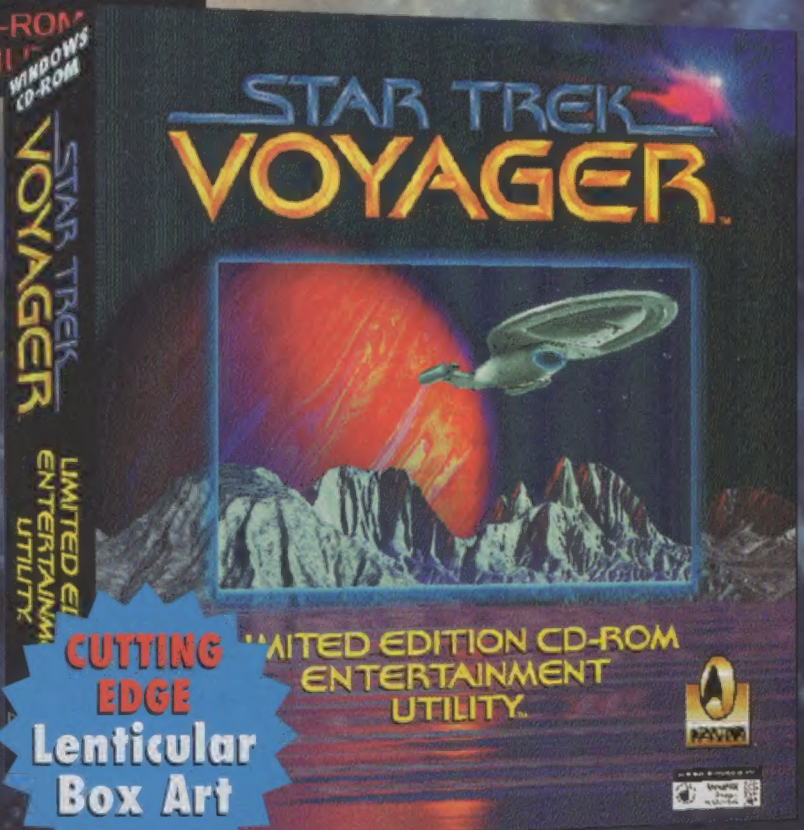

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LETTERS

THE DARK SIDE

I, like many other *Star Wars* mega-fans, once worshiped George Lucas as a god. That changed [soon after] I learned of the new *Star Wars* special edition. My first reaction was pure excitement—then I came back down to earth and thought about the ramifications of this "special edition." I was entranced when I first saw the film in the theater—in my mind it was perfect. I still watch the film religiously and find that it's just as magical. *Star Wars* exists in my mind as its own entity—in its own way, it is a part of me—and now Mr. Lucas feels he needs to meddle with this "entity" to "get it closer to his original vision." Not only is he meddling with an already-established legend with its roots deeply imbedded in our society, he is changing something that exists in the mind of every person who first saw the film and found themselves in total awe of this universe he had created for us. What Mr. Lucas needs to understand is just how much of an impact the film and the rest of the trilogy have had on people's lives. Granted, the special edition won't have all that much new footage besides the Han-Jabba encounter and some other FX scenes, but those little differences can change the whole experience. I no longer think of Mr. Lucas as a deity-like figure. I think of him as a human being like the rest of us, because we all make mistakes. Has Mr. Lucas been enticed to the dark side of the Force? That's a question only the great Jedi master Yoda could answer.

NAME WITHHELD
VIA EMAIL

TROUBLE WITH TREK

I think that Harlan Ellison had a right to react to the plethora of slander the way he did [in *The City on the Edge of Forever*, which was reviewed by Douglas Perry in *CINESCAPE*'s Nov./Dec. issue]. If you want the truth, sometimes you have to express things that may not be sugar-coated. I felt that Ellison's incessant "ranting" resonated with liberating insight. Yes, it was "just one freakin' episode," but a reader could learn a lot about the creative process and how the media butchers it by reading *The City on the Edge of Forever*. It points to a larger scheme of important issues. And still, that original script is a diamond in a mudslide. Today I find that *Star Trek* is, at best, addictive, but not really interesting anymore. I used to be a rabid fan, but it hasn't lived up to the expectations it originally brought out. And we learn why from Ellison: The writers aren't given enough freedom to do their best.

STEFAN HURZELER
VIA EMAIL

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THE LOVE GLOAT

This letter is in response to the article, *X Appeal* by Mo Ryan, which appeared in your special *X-Files* issue. I agree with the basic premise of the article that Mulder and Scully's relationship is a far more profound storyline than that of the so-called "mythology" storyline. I disagree, however, with the idea, that a physically intimate relationship between these characters, a "romance," is (a) somehow a lower order of relationship or (b) the consummation of a sexual relationship would ruin the relationship and is, therefore, to be avoided. Those of us who "clamor" for a more intimate relationship recognize fully that Mulder and Scully already have a profound friendship that is unique in the television world. Your writer's perfunctory comparison of the relationships of Maddy and David (*Moonlighting*) and Diane and Sam (*Cheers*) as proof that *X-Files* creator, Chris Carter, is wise not to take Mulder and Scully down this path has always been a specious comparison—even when made by Mr. Carter. *Moonlighting* and *Cheers* both focused on an adversarial, bantering, love/hate relationship between the two leads.

This does not describe, in any way, shape or form, the relationship between Scully and Mulder. Slowly, over three seasons, the professional pairing of Mulder and Scully has become a friendship that is intense, intimate (although not sexually so) and exclusive. Each of these characters has said to the other, "I trust only you." If this is true, who else could either of one of them have a profound, loving, committed and physical relationship with, other than each other? It is the denial of this possibility that I find skews two otherwise wonderful characters toward the unrealistic. Given the highly unrealistic subject matter of *The X-Files*, something about the show needs to be grounded in reality, and Mulder and Scully's partnership should be that something. Just because Mulder and Scully are intent in their quest for the truth does not mean they would not seek out the serenity and peace that could come from their love for each other.

LORNA C. YOUNGS
DENVER, CO

SUMMERTIME BLUES

Another summer has come and gone, and again, the genre films were pretty much lacking substance. *The Arrival* and *Independence Day* were both forgettable sci-fi wastes of time. *Eraser* was the usual "Arnie against an entire mob" thriller. As for *Escape from L.A.*, what the hell is going on with John Carpenter? I am probably the only *CINESCAPE* reader who found *Twister* to be the high point this summer. I thought Helen Hunt and Bill Paxton were in top form and were very likeable. The tornado effects were awesome and the climax was intense. As for *Twister* haters, let's not forget that Jan De Bont's *Speed*, although highly enjoyable, featured a most annoying and irritating supporting cast. I am also very happy *Relic* was not released amidst all the summer clutter. Word is *Relic* is very scary, and I can't wait to see it.

JESUS DIAZ
CENTRAL ISLIP, NY

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Fare Warning

As the action genre wanes and studios plan a disaster film invasion, CINESCAPE *offers a discerning guide to 1997's best prospects*

Action is out. Aliens are in. Disasters are big.

As studio executives firm up their 1997 schedules, the expensively learned lessons of the recent past are weighing heavily on their minds. After a couple of years in which the action genre has become increasingly stale—since 1994's *Speed*, action blockbusters have been few and far between—the suits in the big suites may have finally realized that audiences are tired of the cop-buddy-terrorist formulas. *Executive Decision*, *Broken Arrow* and *The Rock* all made profits, but *Cutthroat Island*, *Under Siege 2*, *The Phantom*, *Dragonheart*, *Judge Dredd*, *Nick of Time* and many more did not. The lesson? Highly paid stars and high-concept formulas aren't an automatic draw anymore.

But lesser-known stars sharing the screen with big-time FX—now that's a pretty good bet. *Twister*, *Independence Day* and even *Toy Story* all depended more on technology than on A-list talent, and those hardy multiplex favorites outperformed just about every overhyped star vehicle that came down the pike.

So that means that movie buffs will be seeing a lot of alien-friendly movies like *Men in Black* and *Starship Troopers* this year. But let's not get ahead of ourselves—let's examine 1997 season by blockbuster season.

WINTER

Of course, movie schedules are always subject to change, but if the current cinema calendar holds up, the first few months of 1997 will be a bonanza for movie fans. The 800-pound gorilla of the new year is, of course, the reissue of *Star Wars*, which opens on Jan. 31. *The Empire Strikes Back* follows close on its heels on Feb. 21, and *Return of the Jedi* completes the trilogy when it re-premieres on March 7. "By releasing the three films only a few weeks apart, we're giving *Star Wars* fans a special opportunity to experience them as one epic story with the full sweep and grandeur that can only come when they're experienced as a trilogy," Twentieth Century Fox CEO Peter Chernin said when the ambitious release schedule was announced.

In response to Fox's heavy-duty frontloading, rival studios have decided to let loose a few big guns of their own in late winter. Disney is set to release the action-comedy *Metro*, starring the phoenix-like Eddie Murphy, on Jan. 17, and at the end of the month, the studio will test the drawing power of *The X-Files'* David Duchovny

ARMED AND READY: (from left) Soldiers attack in *Starship Troopers*; *The Relic*'s grisly carnage; snake frenzy in *Anaconda*

with the thriller *Playing God*. Dueling White House dramas will also grace movie screens around inauguration time, with Warner Bros. swearing in the Wesley Snipes-starrer *Murder at 1600* on Jan. 10, and Sony pledging allegiance to Clint Eastwood on Feb. 7 with the presidential thriller *Absolute Power*. In the disaster realm, Paramount will unleash the oft-delayed monster caper *Relic* on Jan. 17, and Fox's *Volcano* will explode on Feb. 28.

SPRING

Universal will launch its own lava drama, *Dante's Peak*, on March 7, and the following week, Disney fires back with the prison actioner *Con Air*, which stars Nicolas Cage, Steve Buscemi and John Cusack. Later in March, Warner Bros. will release the Steven Seagal flick *Fire Down Below*, and Paramount's *The Saint* comes calling on March 28. The month's heaviest hitter, however, is the Harrison Ford-Brad Pitt cop drama *Devil's Own*, which is currently scheduled for parole on March 26.

SUMMER

May will be dominated by the release of the *Jurassic Park* sequel *The Lost World*, which opens on Memorial Day. The other early-summer favorites include Disney's underwater monster movie *Deep Rising*, which will surface on May 2, and Paramount's *The Flood*, which cascades into theaters on May 16.

Last but not least is the Bruce Willis sci-fi adventure *The Fifth Element*, about which nothing is known except that *The Professional*'s Luc Besson directed the film and that it's opening on May 9.

The titles brawling for king of the midsummer season include James Cameron's *Titanic*, John Woo's *Face Off* and the sequels *Speed 2* and *Batman and Robin*. Visitors from space will include the alien action-comedy *Men In Black*, which features Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith; the outer space adventure *Starship Troopers*; and *Contact*, which stars Jodie Foster as a wide-eyed astronomer. The granddaddy—or grandmama—of all alien fare is, however, the *Alien* series, and Sigourney Weaver and Winona Ryder will stage a battle royale with those pesky creatures some time in July.

The summer season will close with the August Harrison Ford vehicle *AFO*, in which Mr. Likable-But-Gruff will play a president held hostage on his official plane.

FALL

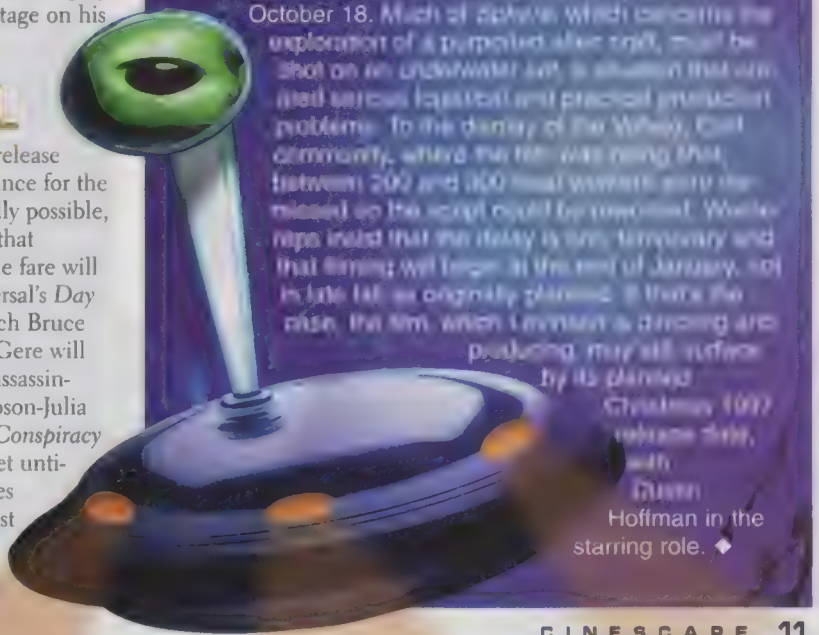
Predicting exact release dates this far in advance for the fall of 1997 isn't really possible, but we can tell you that autumn's high-profile fare will likely include Universal's *Day of the Jackal*, in which Bruce Willis and Richard Gere will star as assassin and assassin-hunter; the Mel Gibson-Julia Roberts drama *The Conspiracy Theory*; and the as-yet untitled eighteenth James Bond movie. The rest of the schedule is top secret. ◆

the future is now

ONE OF THE MOST anticipated movies of all time—the first *Star Wars* prequel—is finally beginning to look like a reality instead of sci-fi fantasy. George Lucas recently announced that he will helm the first new *SW* film, which will be shot from a script that Lucas wrote himself. Preproduction began in September at Leavesden Studios, which is located 25 miles outside London. Lucas chose this site in part because its half-million square feet of covered studio space and 100-acre outdoor backlot make it the largest film production facility in the world. Not much is known about the script, other than it will trace the histories of the original *Star Wars* characters. Sources have reported, however, that the film features a number of computer-generated characters, which will presumably be created by Industrial Light & Magic. According to Lucasfilm, the $70 million film is expected to begin principal photography in the fall of 1997 for a summer 1999 release. ◆

sphere madness

DIRECTOR BARRY LEVINSON may have experienced major box office success with *Sleepers*, but his latest venture, *Sphere*, is taking an unexpected nap. The film, which is based on a 1987 Michael Crichton novel, has racked up preproduction costs of $5 million when the underwater adventure flick was put into dry dock on October 18. Much of *Sphere*, which concerns the exploration of a purported alien craft, must be shot on an underwater set, a situation that has created various logistical and practical production problems. To the dismay of the Wilkes, Fiji community, where the film was being shot, between 200 and 300 local workers were dismissed as the script could be rewritten. Warner reps insist that the delay is only temporary and that filming will begin at the end of January, not in late fall as originally planned. If that's the case, the film, which Levinson is directing and producing, may still surface by its planned Christmas 1997 release date, with Dustin Hoffman in the starring role. ◆



WORKING FOR SCALE

With his trademark paunch allowing him to look anywhere but straight down, it's unlikely that Alfred Hitchcock could fully appreciate the fear of heights suffered by James Stewart in the Master's recently rereleased 1958 classic, *Vertigo*. But just how many pounds did the late filmmaker pack on his famously rotund frame? Although his girth actually fluctuated throughout his career, three of his leading ladies weigh in with daring, if wildly disparate, guesstimates.–*Dean Lamanna*

Janet Leigh, *Psycho* (1960)
"He was around my height, which is about five-foot-six. I'd say he was about 210, or something like that."

Tippi Hedren, *The Birds* (1963)
"He was not very tall: I think he was about five-foot-seven. So I'd venture he was 260."

Karen Black, *Family Plot* (1976)
"When I worked with him...he was taking pills that took the water out of his system, so he would have violent shifts in weight. I would guess he was only 165." ◆

A WEIGHTY ISSUE: The director indulges his sweet tooth

marshal arts

TOMMY LEE JONES is on the case—again. Jones is reprising his Oscar-winning role as Sam Gerard in *U.S. Marshals*, the sequel to the 1993 blockbuster *The Fugitive*. Nope, the new movie has nothing to do with Harrison Ford, who starred in the first film. This time the focus will be on federal marshal Gerard, who, having successfully tracked the good doctor in *The Fugitive*, must hound another escaped convict through the streets of a major city. John Gray, director of *The Glimmer Man*, was originally set to helm *U.S. Marshals*, but that deal fell through, and now the job will go to Stuart Baird (*Executive Decision*). Warner Bros. is reteaming Jones with *The Fugitive*'s original producers, Anne and Arnold Kopelson, and the studio is hoping that the film series could become a long-running franchise.

As of yet, no other cast members have been named to join Jones, who recently finished work on Twentieth Century Fox's *Volcano*. ◆

pitt stop

WHO SAYS DEATH can't have a little fun once in a while? The Grim Reaper on holiday is the premise of *Meet Joe Black*, a remake that just landed Brad Pitt as its star. The Universal film is based on a 1934 Frederic March movie called *Death Takes a Holiday*, in which a job-weary Death falls in love with a woman while vacationing on Earth. Martin Brest (*Scent of a Woman*) will direct and produce the new version of the film.

It seems Pitt is edging closer and closer to mega-star salary with his latest role. Pitt, who made "only" $4 million for *Seven* and most recently filmed *Devil's Own* for $10 million, has agreed to a salary of $17.5 million for *Meet Joe Black*. ◆

HOLLYWOOD CHATTER

[redacted] Angela Bassett, who recently starred in *Waiting to Exhale* and *Strange Days*, passed up a number of starring roles so that she could play a supporting part in director Robert Zemeckis' latest project, *Contact*. Bassett will play the White House assistant chief of staff in the Warner Bros. movie, which is based on the book by the same name from Dr. Carl Sagan, astronomer and Pulitzer Prize-winning author. The film tells the story of deep-space researcher Ellie Arroway, who decodes a transmission from outer space. Once the signal is deciphered, she and four others are able to travel to the center of the galaxy. Jodie Foster will play Arroway, and Matthew McConaughey, James Woods, Tom Skerritt, John Hurt and Rob Lowe have signed on to play supporting characters.

CONTRACT FOR CONTACT: Bassett

[redacted]ACY PLAN: Julia Roberts has teamed up with Mel Gibson in *The Conspiracy Theory*, a comedy-action-adventure from Warner Bros. The movie is about a paranoid cab driver who publishes a newsletter filled with his rants about various—you guessed it—conspiracies. His life is turned upside down when one of his theories turns out to be a reality. Richard Donner—who helmed Gibson's *Lethal Weapon* series—is directing the film, and production began in October.

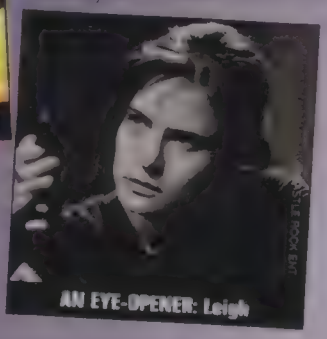
[redacted]STALKINGS RUN [redacted]: *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*, a '70s TV series about the paranormal adventures of a Chicago journalist, aired recently on the Sci-Fi channel, and that exposure sparked a new generation's interest in the show that was the inspiration for *The X-Files*. For insatiable fans who may have missed the re-runs, the folks at re-tv Video Library have put together *Kolchak: The Night Stalker—The Collector's Edition*.

These digitally remastered video tapes are available only through phone orders, which can be placed by calling the company at 1 (800) 638-2922.

CONSPIRACIST: Roberts

STRANGE VOICES: Leonard Nimoy of classic *Star Trek* fame and John de Lancie (the quirky Q of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Star Trek: Voyager*) are launching a new company that will create audio dramatizations of classic sci-fi novels. The company, which is called Alien Voices, will work with the publishing firm Simon & Schuster Audio to bring to life the works of H.G. Wells, Jules Verne and others. Their first production is Wells' *The Time Machine*, which is slated for an April 1997 release. The production will be released on both cassette and CD, and the cast will include several past and present *Trek* alums, including de Lancie and Nimoy.

ROLLING STONE: Sharon Stone has closed deals on two upcoming movies, one of which is an action-thriller titled *The Enemy Within*. In that film, Stone will play an deep-cover CIA agent in Russia whom the Kremlin wrongly perceives to be a double agent. The other film is a remake of the 1980 John Cassavetes film *Gloria*, in which she will play a Bronx woman forced to confront the mob. Stone had been considering accepting a part in *Sphere*, the Barry Levinson undersea adventure flick, but that possibility fell apart when the production was put on hold.



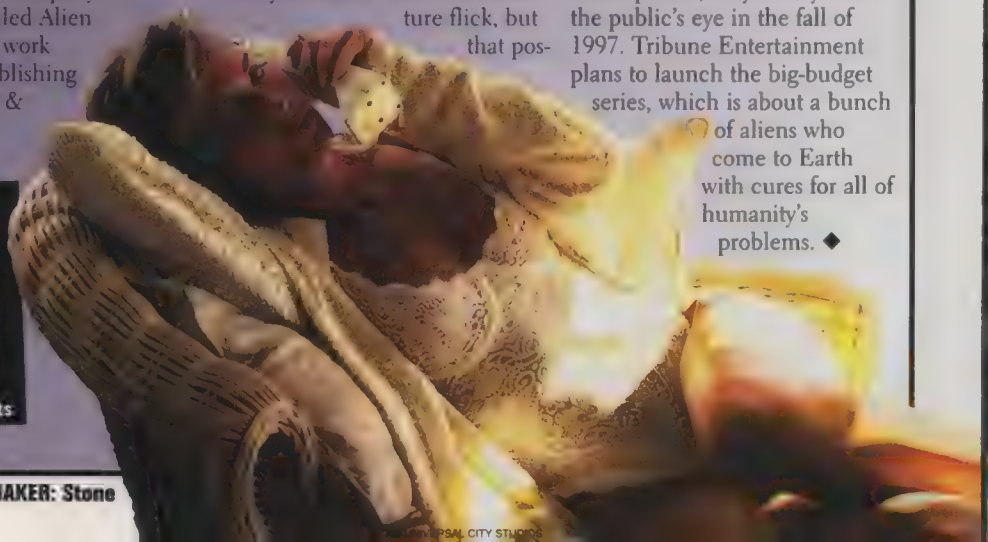
AN EYE-OPENER: Leigh

BOOK LOVER: John Travolta seems to be taking full advantage of his resurgence as one of filmdom's most popular (and most highly paid) actors. He will portray a politician in Mike Nichols' *Primary Colors* and a crusading personal-injury lawyer in *A Civil Action*, projects that are both based on bestselling recent books.

BY THE BOOK: Travolta

EYES HAVE IT: Stanley Kubrick's latest film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, is finally about to begin production in England. In addition to Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, Jennifer Jason Leigh (*Georgia*) has recently joined the cast. As usual, the cryptic Kubrick will both produce and direct the film, which is derived from his own screenplay about the problems of a modern married couple.

TARGET EARTH: *Battleground Earth*, a Gene Roddenberry sci-fi series long in development, may finally reach the public's eye in the fall of 1997. Tribune Entertainment plans to launch the big-budget series, which is about a bunch of aliens who come to Earth with cures for all of humanity's problems. ◆



DEALMAKER: Stone

SHUE fetish

Abandoning the indie circuit, Elisabeth Shue is hoping her tryst with The Saint will lead to a little bit of box-office heaven

By Cindy Pearlman

Elisabeth Shue doesn't feel like a saint. "I am a sinner," the actress admits, and during an early-morning break from filming *The Saint* with Val Kilmer, she has decided to come clean.

Her sin? Despite playing a chemist named Emma in the big-budget remake of the popular '60s TV series, Shue is blinded by science. To her, test tubes and Bunsen burners are the building blocks of confusion. "In the movie, I'm close to solving the formula for cold fusion," she explains. But then the Academy Award nominee reveals the truth about her level of scientific knowledge. "I've spent time with real chemists, and I'm just not getting it," she wails in mock desperation. "I feel so dense! Chemistry was one of my worst subjects."

No matter—the chemistry that's really cooking here is between Shue and Kilmer, who plays the film's title role. "Simon, the Saint, is hired to come and steal my secret formula," she says. "We're rivals, but we're never really at each other's throats. He's sent out on this job, and I make the job very difficult for him."

Shue knows all about jobs that get difficult. Besides enduring a strenuous intercontinental shoot for the *Saint*, which filmed on location in Russia and Paris as well as on a studio

lot in Hollywood, Shue has had to put up with all manner of rumors regarding her and Kilmer. The nice girl from *Adventures in Babysitting* is living through her very own Adventures in Tabloids—for weeks, the supermarket rags have been screaming that Kilmer and the very-married Shue are having an on-set romance.

Over coffee at Los Angeles' Four Seasons Hotel, Shue, dressed demurely in a black suit, says the shoe doesn't fit and she won't wear it. "You know, they said that I was having a fling with Tom Cruise on the set of *Cocktail*," she says with a weary smile. Was she? "Sorry to disappoint you," she laughs.

Ah, fame. Ever since her critically acclaimed performance in *Leaving Los Vegas*, Shue has both ascended to Hollywood's A-list and learned to deal with the unpleasant fallout of success. Tell her that E! the Entertainment Channel recently broadcast that she wasn't allowed to attend a fashion show because one of the models wouldn't walk the runway if Shue was in the audience, and the actress is both incredulous and impressed. "How stupid can you get? It's so untrue," she sighs—then asks breathlessly, "Did I make *The Gossip Show*? Wow!

"At some point you do have to have a sense of humor," she adds. "I've found that out over the last [few] weeks. It's insanity. First of all, Val and I just couldn't believe the rumors. We're just friends and co-workers. Now I have some inkling that if you become friends with an actor, this kind of stuff will come out. I guess I was just incredibly naive. I've become good friends with every actor I've ever worked with. I think you have to in order to do good work. This set is no different."

Despite the tabloid headlines, Shue is glad she chose to do *The Saint*, a Paramount Pictures vehicle that promises to be one of the splashiest action outings of 1997. "I chose it primarily because of the director [Phillip Noyce] and because of the story." This from the star of *Leaving Las Vegas*, the dark art-house hit of 1995? "You'd think that *The Saint* is just a big $75 million action-adventure story," the actress admits, "but at the heart of the story is this beautiful love between these two people.

"The character I got to play is somebody who is very innocent and very isolated in the scientific world of discovery," she adds. "She's very shy and afraid of relationships and afraid to take risks. I just wanted to play someone who came from that pure place of discovery and wonder."

And how does Val Kilmer's portrait of the suave Simon Templar compare to the TV hero played by Roger Moore? "I think they're completely different," Shue says, before making another slightly embarrassing confession. "To be honest, I've never seen [the TV show] *The Saint*. I haven't read any of the comics. Am I terrible or what?" she asks sheepishly. She does reveal that the plot of the movie relates how the dapper Templar becomes the heroic, justice-seeking "Saint," and that the film's depiction of that transformation is "a completely different story than [what's in] some of the comics."

Though she's a little sketchy on the title character's origin, Shue's blithe tone of voice leads one to believe that the *Saint* shoot has been a breeze. What's this—no tales of a demanding and difficult Kilmer? Hasn't the former Batman been living up to his reputation as Hollywood's leading bad boy? "Oh, I thought he was wonderful," says Shue. "We had a really good working experience. When I first went to work with him, of course, I heard tons of stories and I had to wonder. The thing that stayed with me is that I also realized that sometimes 'difficult' actors are really actors who care. Val turned out to be one of those. He cares. Is that so bad? I think my [good] instincts about him were right."

Good instincts—or rather, good career karma—seem to be following Shue around like a lovesick puppy these days. Who knew that behind the bubble-headed girl of *Adventures in Babysitting*, *Cocktail* and *Back to the Future* 2 lurked a Serious Actress, one who vaulted over a clutch of proven stars to snag an Oscar nomination for her turn as a despair-filled hooker in *Leaving Las Vegas*?

"Well, it would be kind of childish to feel vindicated," Shue says of her sudden A-list status, but she also admits that "it's nice when you meet someone and look them in the eye and you know they were one of those people who didn't believe in you. There haven't been that many of those non-believers in my life, but there are a few. And it is nice to see them now. I don't have to say anything, they just look at me like, 'Who knew?'"

And who knew she'd be sitting in the Dorothy Chandler pavilion in Los Angeles last March? The actress recalls her Academy Awards experience as both enjoyable and unsettling. "I remember giving out the best documentary award, and my father-in-law was up for it," explains Shue, who is married to director David Guggenheim. "We kept [the family connection] secret from the Academy, because I don't think they would have allowed me to present that award if they knew about [it]. I remember his Oscar moment more than I remember my own," she recalls with a rueful grin. "I was up there wanting so badly to see his name, and then I was crushed after not seeing it.

"Then I lost," she laughs. Was she depressed? She shakes her head. "It didn't take any spark away from it. I mean, I knew what the outcome was going to be. I was totally happy for Susan Sarandon and she

It would be childish to feel vindicated, but it's nice when you meet someone and you know they were one of those people who didn't believe in you. I don't have to say anything, they just look at me like, 'Who knew?'

completely deserved to win. I was very happy to be there at all.

"I didn't have to give the speech," she adds with a note of relief. "I think speaking in public is terrifying. Any time I lost any of the [other] awards, I was happy."

Before *Leaving Las Vegas*, however, the 30-something actress was not such a happy camper. She thought she was doomed to play mindless babes and girlfriends forever. "I was in desperate need of [the *Vegas*] script," she recalls. "When I got it, I don't know if I was surprised, because I felt like I had been waiting for something like that to come along for some time.

"I knew it was a film that would move people to think about their own pain and inner demons," she continues. The secret to her depiction of the world-weary yet winning Sera, she reveals, is that "I turned every negative into a positive. I didn't look at my character as a hooker. I thought she was someone that was bruised by life. You bring your own emotional traumas from your life, that's how you find honest work. I've sustained a lot of trauma in my life and a lot of things that helped me understand her pain. I've lost someone I loved. I know what that's like," she says, referring to an older brother who suffered an accidental death on a family vacation. "I guess everyone has pain," she says in a quiet voice. "Time passes, but you never forget."

Changing the subject, Shue returns to one of the best things that's happened to her lately—her post-*Vegas* success story. Though she admits that "the pile [of scripts] I see is much less than the pile that Julia Roberts or Jodie Foster sees," Shue is adamant that she's "looking for quality, not quantity."

"I look to find a character that speaks to me in some way. Someone I understand. Someone who will take me to a place I haven't gone before. Who will tap into a side of myself that I haven't expressed. And then I look for a story that moves me."

Making considerate, thoughtful choices means that Shue hardly worked for six years after her starring turns in lighthearted fare like *Babysitting* and *Cocktail*. "It was difficult," the former Harvard undergraduate admits, "but in the end, that's the only way you grow—when you go through a difficult time. I'm glad I spent that time struggling to find out who I was and what I was ultimately going to be about.

"At that young age, I was so insecure about who I was that I didn't know that you have to dig deeper to do really good work. I did enough to pay the bills, I just never found anything that was challenging. I took acting lessons. I fell in love. In a lot of ways it was the most creative time of my life, only no one saw it."

And where did she meet her husband? "We met at a Hollywood party, which obviously isn't the place I thought I'd meet 'The Guy,'" she says with a smile. "I guess it was kind of corny, but it really was love at first sight. We fell in love immediately. You have this feeling that this is the person you were meant to be with. You are just drawn in. And there's no control over it. It just happens."

Clearly, that's the kind of chemistry Shue understands best. ◆

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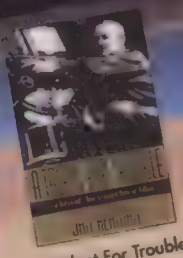

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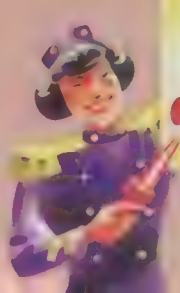

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NOT OF THIS EARTH
THE MOST INFLUENTIAL SCIENCE FICTION FILMS OF ALL TIME
BY DOUGLAS PERRY, MB RYAN, KRISTIN KLOBERDANZ AND FRANK KURTZ

"I'm still big," Gloria Swanson declares in *Sunset Boulevard*. "It's the pictures that got small."

In the 47 years since the release of Billy Wilder's classic, the pendulum has swung wildly in the other direction. Driven by technology, movies are bigger than they ever have been, and the stars are now much smaller—indeed, filmmakers are even threatening to replace actors altogether with "synthespians."

How did this happen? And is it good or bad?

For sheer entertainment spectacle, you can't beat this new era—as anyone who saw *Independence Day* can attest. But grandiose special effects haven't changed the art of moviemaking for the best of the breed. Though famed schlockmeister Roger Corman may offer an argument, science fiction always has been about more than laser battles, spaceships and gravity-defying breasts.

Award-winning sci-fi writer Robert Heinlein, for one, defined the genre as "trying to figure out from the past and from the present what the future may be." That's a broad purview, and it covers not only the big issues like technology, the environment and Armageddon, but also something much more abstract: humanity. The great space adventures are great because they're about characters that matter to us—and because, though the films typically happen in far-away worlds, they make us think just a little bit differently about *our* world.

So it isn't enough to be a first-rate film to make our list—the films we've chosen are even more than that. They've become part of popular culture and they've set the standard for subsequent films in the genre. At its best, Hollywood is a mirror we hold up to ourselves, and the following pictures offer the least distortion.

1 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (U.S., 1968)

DIRECTED BY STANLEY KUBRICK, SCREENPLAY BY STANLEY KUBRICK AND ARTHUR C. CLARKE

Even with the technical limitations of the time, 1950s sci-fi cinema achieved the occasional moment of transcendence, especially in classics such as *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *The Thing* and *Forbidden Planet*. But by the late 1960s, the genre had fallen from prominence, and cheesy exploitation flicks like *They Came From Beyond Space* and *Barbarella* were the norm. Then came *2001*, which restored thematic legitimacy to outer-space adventures and even dared to raise them to the realm of Art.

Perhaps Stanley Kubrick's film is so influential because it's really three films in one—each of which was on the vanguard in its own way. The "early man" opening sequence is as masterful as any ever done. The segment is astonishingly realistic; in fact, it looks less like a feature film than a well-made documentary on prehistoric life. This unusual opening isn't simply Kubrick pursuing his own private muse; it dovetails neatly into the stately scenes that depict one astronaut's journey (and mankind's progress) into space, and Kubrick's mastery of the frame in these trip-to-the-moon shots is breathtaking. The majesty and "truth" of the movie's effects—all accomplished without motion-control or digital technology—set the standard by which all future sci-fi endeavors would be judged. And until George Lucas' *Star Wars*, which famously echoed Kubrick's imagery in its very first shot, no other film even came close to matching *2001*'s visual achievement.

The middle segment of the movie, which chronicles the breakdown of the supercomputer HAL on board a ship traveling to Jupiter, could almost stand alone as a tense thriller. Kubrick's warning about the fallibility of technology is a genre mainstay, but the subject never has been done better, despite the horde of filmmakers (including Lucas in *THX 1138*) who have worked with the theme.

As for the last cryptic segment—well, it's anyone's guess as to what it truly means—but it's unforgettable, and at least its clever bizarreness has meant that moviegoers have been spared myriad incompetent imitations of it. ◆

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2 STAR WARS

(U.S., 1977) WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY GEORGE LUCAS

It's only a few seconds long, but one short scene in *Star Wars* shows why the film has become a classic. As Imperial troops are hustling Chewbacca to a jail cell, a small rectangular droid rolls into the towering Wookie's path. A rumbling growl from Chewie alerts the busy little droid to what's in front of it, and it instantly utters a small cry, then quickly reverses and scoots back whence it came.

Why should such a seemingly meaningless snippet of film prove that *Star Wars* is a timeless achievement? Well, taken out of context, it doesn't, and certainly the film's plot doesn't in any way need that little moment to happen. But by putting it in his picture, George Lucas showed not only how much fun movies could be—to create and to watch—but how committed he was to making even the smallest part of his epic seem real. Everyone remembers the swooping, dizzying space battles and the raucous scene in Mos Eisley's Cantina, but like the saying goes, it's the little things that count.

Indeed, it's a testament to the filmmaker's vision that every single moment of *Star Wars* rings just as true, from the lived-in look of the Millennium Falcon and other spacecraft (copied in *Alien* and countless subsequent SF films) to the very breadth and scope of Lucas' entire fictional universe. In his review of the picture, Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Roger Ebert noted that *Star Wars* was one of the few films that made him feel like he was having an out-of-body experience: The movie enveloped him so completely that he felt like "it was *happening*—and it was happening to me."

Ebert wasn't alone in that feeling—the whole world was likewise affected, and *Star Wars*' characters and message have become among the most recognizable on the planet. Many subsequent films have attempted to recreate the same sense of childlike wonder and discovery that imbues Lucas' epic, but they've all found that the movie's grand vision and detailed execution are impossible to duplicate. ◆

3 BLADE RUNNER

(U.S., 1982) DIRECTED BY RIDLEY SCOTT, SCREENPLAY BY HAMPTON FANCHER AND DAVID PEOPLES

"Sometimes the design is the statement."

So said director Ridley Scott, and certainly no cinematic production design has had a greater impact in recent years. The world Scott created was fascinating and perversely beautiful, and it was also a turnoff to many viewers, who saw nothing admirable in the film's depiction of an environment so hateful that only extreme experiences could affect its denizens.

Despite such criticism, *Blade Runner* is far more than a production design. It was the instigator of what's become known as "Bleak Chic," an attitude about human nature and progress that has infected everything from *Terminator* and *Alien 3* to the prose landscapes of William Gibson. Rather than the post-apocalypse scenario that dominated dystopian dreams of the '70s (*Quintet*, *Zardoz*), Scott's 1982 adaptation of Philip K. Dick's classic novel showed us the ugly dissipation of a society that has simply given up on itself. War isn't necessary for us to destroy ourselves, Scott seems to be saying, all that's necessary is inertia and apathy.

In the end, though, Scott didn't give up on the world. If the suggestion in the 1992 Director's Cut that android hunter Rick Deckard was a replicant himself outraged fans, it only reinforced the film's quixotic optimism that individuals have the ability to overcome truly horrific circumstances. Screenwriter Hampton Fancher said that the idea behind making Deckard an android "was supposed to be [for viewers] to take [their] own empathy test....See how human you really are, because we can always be better at being human." ◆

4 METROPOLIS

(GERMANY, 1927) DIRECTED BY FRITZ LANG, SCREENPLAY BY LANG AND THEA VON HARBOU

The *Blade Runner* of its day, *Metropolis* was the first fully realized cinematic vision of a believable city of the future, boasting spiraling, awe-inspiring skyscrapers that sprout confidently out of a fiery industrial ghetto. Inspired in part by exposés like Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Lang's dystopia, populated by humans and machines lost amid a ceaseless haze of pollution, is also an inventive techno-fantasy, featuring if not the first then certainly the best robot ever to grace the big screen, the Robotrix, whose design clearly inspired *Star Wars'* C-3P0. Almost by itself, *Metropolis* elevated science fiction from the realm of pure fantasy, and it set high standards for its successors. Two years after its release, Lang himself further pushed sci-fi realism with *The Woman in the Moon*, the film that introduced the Launch Countdown that NASA later made famous. ◆

5 THE TERMINATOR

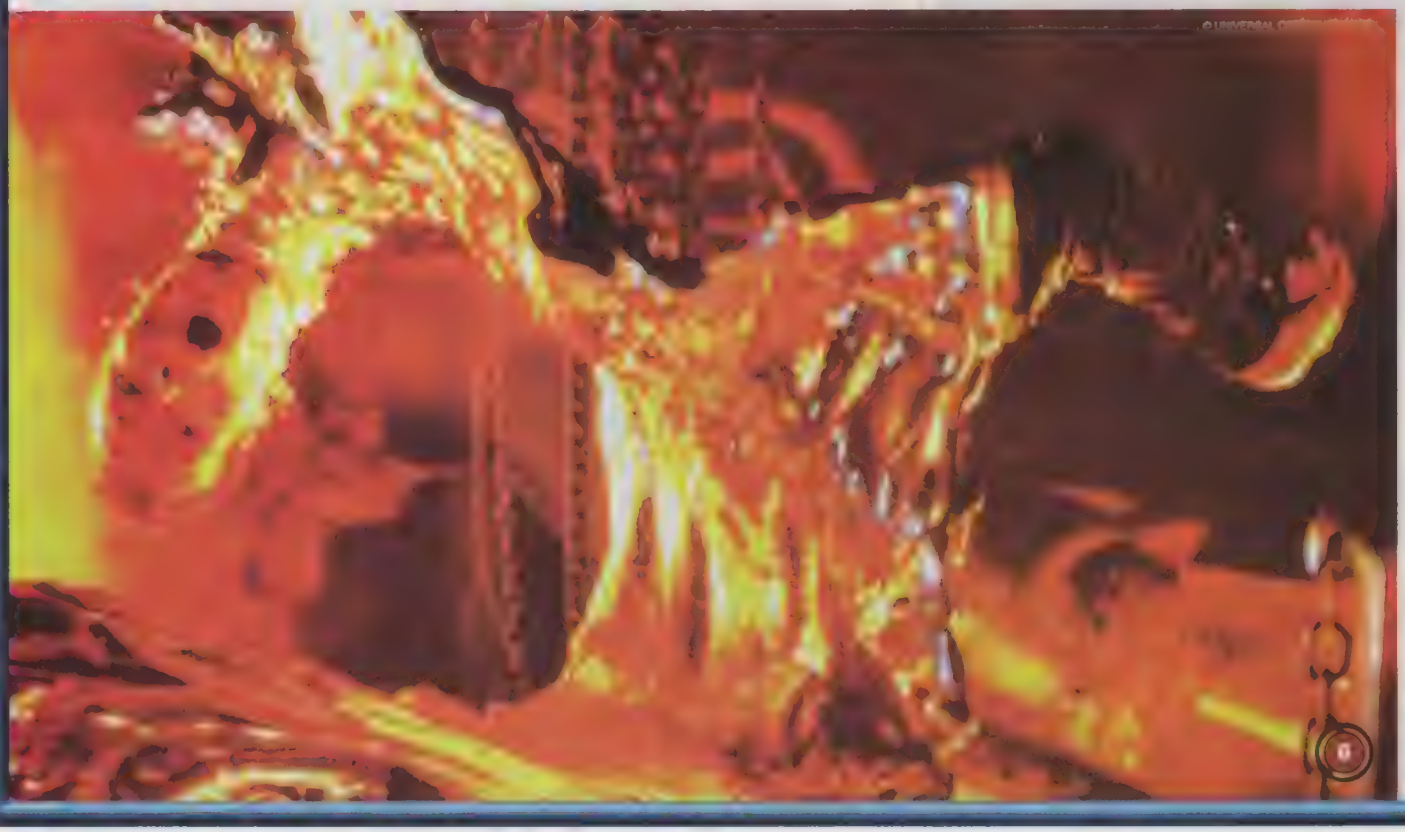
(U.S., 1984) DIRECTED BY JAMES CAMERON, SCREENPLAY BY JAMES CAMERON AND GALE ANN HURD BASED ON A STORY BY HARLAN ELLISON

6 TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY

(U.S., 1991) DIRECTED BY JAMES CAMERON, SCREENPLAY BY JAMES CAMERON AND WILLIAM WISHER

Though Cameron's apocalyptic vision of a machine-controlled populace inhabiting a dismal post-nuclear landscape has become the status quo in both television and film depictions of the future, it's a measure of *Terminator* and *Terminator 2*'s importance that they've influenced the development of the action and sci-fi genres far beyond their dystopian landscapes.

Not since *Star Trek*'s "City on the Edge of Forever" almost two decades earlier had time travel really been used effectively as a cinematic plot device, and *The Terminator* unleashed a torrent of projects that ripped off its clever, century-hopping twist and intense action set pieces (i.e., *TimeCop*, *Total Recall*, etc.). Seven years later, no one thought Cameron could top himself with the second *Terminator* film, but the writer-director won over critics and audiences alike by putting his entire $100 million budget on the screen. By ingeniously employing the biggest FX development of the last 10 years—the ability to create and manipulate characters with computer-generated effects—Cameron opened up the the entire world of film to a staggering array of possibilities, in which dinosaurs could roam the earth (*Jurassic Park*) and aliens could conquer Manhattan (*Independence Day*). ◆



COURTESY OF EVERETT COLLECTION

THE UNKINDEST CUT?

What makes John Carpenter excited? How about numb and annoyed? The horror king offers his best of sci-fi, and a little something extra

ANYONE COMPILING A *list of the most influential horror films ever would dare not exclude John Carpenter's* Halloween *from the top spot, lest Michael Myers or one of his many imitators appear out of the shadows to seek bloody revenge.*

But in spite of the wide-reaching influence of that 1978 scream classic, as well as subsequent genre films such as The Fog *and* Christine, *Carpenter can't be pigeonholed as a gore-meister. The maverick filmmaker can not only carry a horror film fest on his own, he also can boast of an impressive sci-fi résumé, including* Escape From New York, Starman, Big Trouble in Little China *and perhaps the most influential student sci-fi film of all time,* Dark Star.

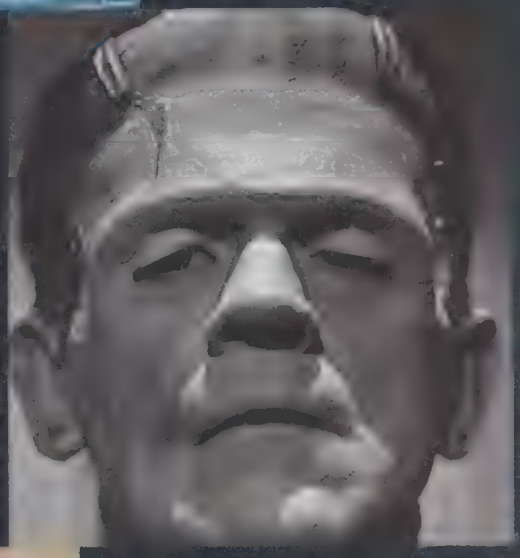
Carpenter's films have always been quirky, insightful and highly personal, so when we asked him for the sci-fi films he considers most influential, we weren't surprised to get a list (and a commentary) to match. To wit, Carpenter speaks:

The most influential SF films are not necessarily the best, but something about them resonated with the public, and any time the public has been "resonated" the movie industry takes notice.

Having said that, I still believe that some very influential science fiction films are much less [known by the public] than their big box-office brothers. For example, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* left me numb and slightly annoyed, although I'm not sure I can tell you why exactly. So, here's my idiosyncratic list of most influential."

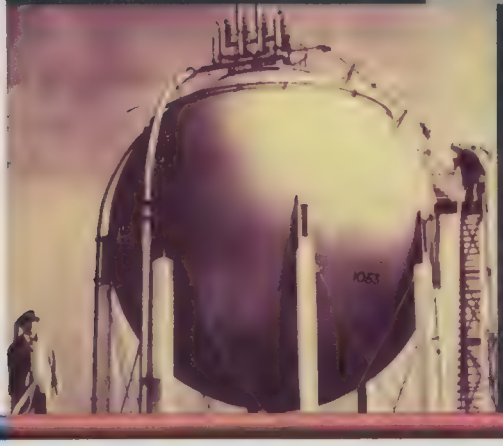
THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD (1951)
Intellectual carrot threatens mankind. This movie has influenced more sci-fi cinema and TV than any other film. I remade it in '82, returning to the source material (*Who Goes There*, by John W. Campbell), but my version isn't a patch to the original.

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1956)
Seed pods invade from space, replace humans with emotionless clones. It's been re-made twice



and ripped off a hundred times, though it bears a distinct similarity to an earlier film, which was...

QUATERMASS II (ENEMY FROM SPACE) (1955)
Based upon a BBC television serial. Aliens possess humans in order to conquer the Earth. Bitter original author Nigel Kneale hates this filmed version of his teleplay, but then again he tends to hate everything.



THE QUATERMASS EXPERIMENT (THE CREEPING UNKNOWN) (1955)
Invisible space invader absorbs two astronauts, enters a third and transforms him into slop monster. Ripped off most famously by *The Blob*. An 8-year-old boy had a heart attack while watching it.

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (1968)
Quasi-religious alien-encounter space epic. Ground-breaking effects. Parodied and copied by almost everyone.

It Came From Outer Space (1953)
Benign aliens crash-land on Earth and clone humans while they repair their spaceship. Predates *Close Encounters, E.T., Starman* and others.

WAR OF THE WORLDS (1953)
The definitive alien invasion movie. It's been copied over and over, from *Earth Vs. the Flying Saucers* to *Independence Day*.

FRANKENSTEIN (1931)
The grandaddy of all mad-scientist monster movies. Although thought of as primarily a horror movie, the story is sci-fi. A seminal work.

METROPOLIS (1926)
Fritz Lang's dystopian masterpiece. This is an amazing film, it is German Expressionistic sci-fi. The first great robot in movie history.

THE WOMAN IN THE MOON (1929)
Fritz Lang invented "5, 4, 3, 2, 1... blast off!" *The Woman in the Moon* has had an impact on all space travel movies that've come since, including *Destination Moon*. ◆

THE ALMOSTS, THE MAYBES AND THE GUILTY PLEASURES

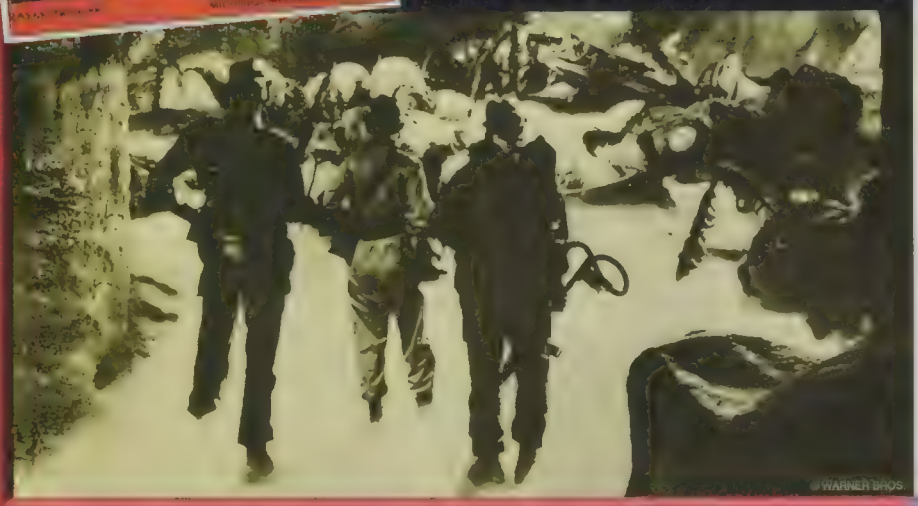
EVEN GREAT FILMS have their wobbly moments—remember the wires that held up the Martian ships in *War of the Worlds*?—but what about those wobbly films that have great moments? In whittling down our list to a mere 20 sci-fi classics, many much-loved favorites didn't make the cut, but still deserve their place in film history and in fan's hearts. Here are a few:

Flash Gordon (1936), starring the perfectly cast Buster Crabbe, was a hearty combination of rollicking adventure and budget sci-fi, and it certainly cast a spell on George Lucas as he was creating **Star Wars** some 40 years later.

Based on the H.G. Wells novel **The Island of Dr. Moreau, The Island of Lost Souls** (1930) took the Frankenstein concept several nightmarish steps too far. Not only was Dr. Moreau (Charles Laughton at his creepy best) "tampering in God's domain," but in the process he created lots of monsters that didn't take well to the doctor's sadistic whims. Before you claim an old movie can't affect jaded modern moviegoers, see this film.

As fears about the Bomb swept through the U.S. in the '50s, films emerged that bared the collective unconscious of the jittery public. The low-budget **Beast From 20,000 Fathoms** (1953) was the first of many films to star an atomically re-animated prehistoric horror, which was brought to life by FX pioneer Ray Harryhausen. Doubts about atomic tests conducted on American soil led to the giant bug romp **Them!** (1954), which kicked off the subgenre of "mutated insects" films. And **Godzilla, King of the Monsters** (1954) embodied all the fears of a Japan that survived nuclear fallout only nine years earlier.

Finally, the future depicted in most sci-fi is horrific at its worst and grim at best—except for **Death Race 2000** (1975). Laughs are plentiful as crazed characters driving whacked-out custom cars get points for offing pedestrians. That vision of the future seems less and less improbable by the day. ◆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7 ALIEN (U.S., 1979) DIRECTED BY RIDLEY SCOTT, SCREENPLAY BY DAN O'BANNON

Alien took horror into space by combining the suspense and human drama of Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* with the ache-down-in-the-extremities terror of John Carpenter's *Halloween*. The film—which follows the crew of the mining ship Nostromo, who inadvertently bring aboard a vicious extra-terrestrial life form—has been the source material for an astonishing run of lone-stalker and chest-burster rip-offs, ranging from *Saturn Three* and *Inseminoid* to *Parasite*.

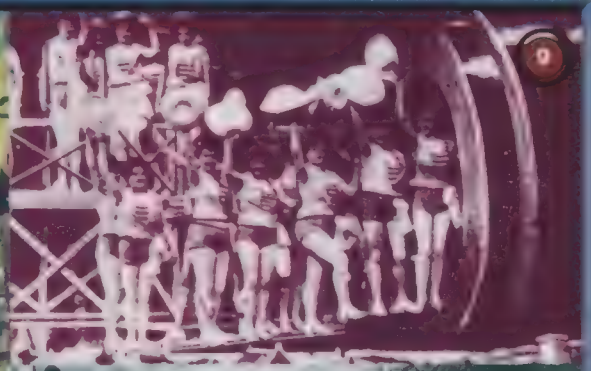
Although Dan O'Bannon didn't break any new ground with his script (his inspiration came from films such as *The Thing From Another Planet*), Scott's execution of the material was brilliant. Like Lucas did in *Star Wars*, Scott showed us advanced space-travel technology that's not sleek and awe-inspiring but used and even dilapidated. And his characters, stereotypical and yet undeniably human, perfectly fit the ramshackle ship in which they fought and died. Perhaps most importantly, of course, H.R. Giger's singular alien design changed the way both Hollywood and the public envision alien life, replacing the big-headed, almond-eyed Mars Men of yore with horrific, insect-like creatures from the depths of some cosmic hell. ◆

8 THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (U.S., 1951) DIRECTED BY ROBERT WISE, SCREENPLAY BY EDMUND H. NORTH

Released at the height of the Cold War, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* proved that sci-fi cinema can—and perhaps should—traffic in noble humanitarian themes.

In 1951, the prevailing mood of the country held that if aliens ever dropped in on planet Earth, mass hysteria would follow. So it was somewhat of a shock that the alien star of Wise's movie was not a snarling fiend, but a benevolent, understanding father figure. This was one of the first times aliens were seen in this compassionate light, and it set the stage for E.T.'s excellent adventure as well as *Close Encounters*' wondrous sequence between the visitors from the alien ship and the humans that greet them.

And who could forget Klaatu's faithful robot Gort, the prototype for the classic metallic sci-fi sidekick? His love of violence and mindless obedience made him the prototype for the Terminator. ◆



9 A TRIP TO THE MOON/Le Voyage dans la Lune

(FRANCE, 1902) WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY GEORGES MÉLIÈS

A Trip to the Moon showcases imaginative imagery that was unprecedented and truly astonishing for its time, such as the rocketship crashing into the eye of the man in the moon, the astronauts' encounter with crustacean-like creatures and the elaborate court of the Moon King. It was this revolutionary film that showed directors like Fritz Lang and William Cameron Menzies (see #4 *Metropolis* and #11 *Things to Come*) what was possible with the fledgling art of film. The first director to work extensively with oversized mechanical models, Melies created most of the tricks of "trick photography"—that is, the very techniques of modern filmmaking and early special effects, such as dissolves, cuts and the superimposition of one image over another.

More than a groundbreaking creative achievement, *A Trip to the Moon* also boasts a number of prescient predictions about real space travel: the rocketship itself looks somewhat like our Mercury, Gemini and Apollo capsules, the ship is blasted into space from a cannon (reminiscent of later rocket launchers), and a shot of the Earth rising above the rim of the moon anticipates NASA photos taken more than a half-century later. ◆

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10 INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (U.S., 1956)

DIRECTED BY DON SIEGEL, SCREENPLAY BY DANIEL MAINWARING

"The Borg are actually scarier than some monster that tears you apart, because they *don't* tear you apart," *Star Trek: First Contact*'s Herman Zimmerman told Ed Gross last fall. "They make you over into something you don't want to be—that's much scarier than just being killed."

Zimmerman's got a point—one that screen villains have been making ever since *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* exploited the Red paranoia of the '50s. Interpreted variously as an anti-McCarthy piece of agitprop, a horror fable about the dangers of Communism and a warning against mindless conformity, *Body Snatchers* is actually much simpler than those interpretations would have it. The film is a poignant parable about what it means to be human—and how easily that ill-defined humanity can be taken away.

Few themes have been as potent in science fiction. Is *Star Trek*'s Data human? Isn't Rennie, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*'s alien invader, more compassionate and noble than the people he was sent to save? The flip side of that debate is even more chilling—arguably the scariest moment in *Aliens* is when the Marines come across a female colonist who's been subsumed by the extraterrestrials. She's deprived of her freedom and her humanity, but she's still alive. In agony, she asks the soldiers to kill her, a terrible cry of defeat and self-abnegation that *Body Snatchers*' protagonist would have understood all too well. ◆

11 THINGS TO COME (U.K., 1936)

DIRECTED BY WILLIAM CAMERON MENZIES, SCREENPLAY BY H.G. WELLS AND LAJOS BIRO

With its expansive, high-domed interiors suggestive of the lifeless suburban malls of the present day, this film falls into the *Metropolis/Blade Runner* school of futuristic architecture. Menzies was a fantastic imagist (David O. Selznick coined the now-familiar term "production design" to describe Menzies' contribution to 1939's *Gone With the Wind*), and his films,

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Chandu the Magician and the original *Invaders From Mars*, along with *Things To Come*, are cinematic landmarks for their striking, uncluttered visuals.

For its part, *Things to Come* stands out not only for its design but for its social conscience and its ideas regarding social engineering, both hallmarks of Wells' writing. In his original book as well as in the film adaptation, Wells prophesied a world war beginning in 1940. He speculated that the war would lead to the rapid decline of civilization, which could only be reversed by the scientists who made mass destruction possible in the first place. ◆

12 A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (U.K., 1971)

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY STANLEY KUBRICK, BASED ON THE NOVEL BY ANTHONY BURGESS

In comparison to *2001: A Space Odyssey*, man is very much in control of both his environment and his destiny in *A Clockwork Orange*—and that clearly is not such a good thing. Stanley Kubrick's sharp-edged follow-up to his classic space opera offers a pervertedly altruistic ruling class that's just as corrupted as the society's most disreputable outcasts, resulting in a social system in which violent offenders are "rehabilitated" through a process of institutionalized torture—making the film an emotional rite of passage for misunderstood teens the world over.

Through art-house revivals in the '70s and the home-video boom that followed, the film's rampaging "droogs" and their curious lexicon have become as recognizable as the Seven Dwarfs—and a Halloween-costume favorite. Unfortunately, the shock treatment given to chief droog Malcolm McDowell often doesn't filter down to the movie's fans. While Kubrick's contemporary Sam Peckinpah never shrank from showing us the true horror of violence, Kubrick dehumanizes the mayhem in *Clockwork* through stylistic cuteness, from heart-soaring symphonic background music to McDowell doing a bit of soft shoe. The result is unforgettable but ultimately unmoving, like Kafka with a song in his heart. ◆

13 CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND

(U.S., 1977) WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY STEVEN SPIELBERG

Though Spielberg's opus, released just a few months after *Star Wars*, contained special effects almost as impressive as those in pal George Lucas' saga, that's not the reason this film is important.

Take a look at your TV, cruise the Internet, go to the bookstore, and what do you see? Aliens. Those little grey guys with the big eyes are so prevalent these days that

a whole horde of them could land in Times Square and not get a second look. Though it took almost 20 years, it was Spielberg's film—along with his subsequent *E.T.*—that got our culture to look at contact with beings from other worlds not as a potential doomsday scenario but as an exciting, wondrous opportunity.

And Spielberg did his homework well. The film's title comes from a scholarly tome by UFO researcher J. Allan Hynek, and the character played by Francois Truffaut is based on real outer-limits researcher Jacques Vallee. The ideas that percolate in the film—even the shapes of the aliens bodies—were fringe concepts that Spielberg masterfully orchestrated into crowd-pleasing mainstream fare.

The result of all this? A generation grew up wishing not to blast aliens out of the sky, but to find out more about them. ◆

14 THE THING FROM ANOTHER WORLD (U.S., 1951) DIRECTED BY CHRISTIAN NYBY, SCREENPLAY BY CHARLES LEDERER

Four years after the infamous Kenneth Arnold UFO sighting that gave us the phrase "flying saucers," Hollywood released this film, often known by its abbreviated name, *The Thing*. An inspired horror film dressed up in sci-fi trappings, *The Thing From Another World* is also a chilling Cold War allegory that set the tone for countless alien-encounter movies to come.

The 1950s have been labeled by some American historians as "the proud years," but despite the triumphs of Ike and General Motors, American schoolchildren still had to dive under their chairs in regularly scheduled nuclear-bomb drills. A malevolent extraterrestrial with astonishing power was thus the perfect cinematic symbol of the evil Soviet Union and its nukes, and in this film the alien came from a crashed "flying saucer" that's discovered on the North Pole. The military types and scientists at an icy station near the crash site debate whether they have the right to destroy the "Thing," which, in addition to being an insatiable killer, is the first intelligent life humans have encountered from outer space. In the end, of course, they have no choice.

The Thing packs in everything one might expect from a film by Howard Hawks, the legendary director who made most of the important on-set decisions—not credited helmer Christian Nyby. Typical of Hawks' *oeuvre*, the picture has macho male bonding, a strong female character and cool, quirky dialogue that sounds real—all classy touches that most sci-fi films of the era lack. Though it did spark a rash of Cold War allegories, *The Thing*'s true influence is the haunted-house atmosphere that can be seen in everything from *Alien* to *The X-Files*. And after the studios saw the profits *The Thing* grabbed, flying saucers started falling out of the skies in ever-increasing numbers. ◆

15 THE ROAD WARRIOR (AUSTRALIA, 1981) DIRECTED BY GEORGE MILLER, SCREENPLAY BY MILLER, TERRY HAYES AND BRIAN HANNANT

George Miller's Mad Max films are stark, depressing successors to *A Boy and His Dog* and *Death Wish*—without the philosophical musings of the former or the moral outrage of the latter. Mel Gibson is a cop in a scorched-earth future whose wife is killed by a motorcycle gang, a horrific murder that turns him into a numb, relentless vigilante. The best—and best-known—of the trilogy is the second film, *The Road Warrior*, which transforms Gibson into a futuristic Man With No Name, for whom violence has become the only viable means of expression.

Oddly enough, the power of the trilogy is in the anonymity of its futuristic landscape. These are not traditional, post-apocalyptic cautionary tales and Miller has no message—except, perhaps, that you've got to watch your own back. *The Road Warrior*, coming on the heels of the low-budget, independent original, took this bloody nihilism to its apex; it is nothing more than a relentless, kinetic thrill ride, made for the emerging video-game subculture—the kind of perpetually violent entertainment that became *de rigueur* in

the '80s and makes classic action films built around plot and character—like *The French Connection*—seem snail-on-downers slow by comparison. ◆

16 PLANET OF THE APES (U.S., 1968) DIRECTED BY FRANKLIN J. SCHAFFNER; SCREENPLAY BY MICHAEL WILSON AND ROD SERLING

During the Second World War, U.S. government propaganda films depicted Japanese soldiers as dirty little monkeys with thick glasses and buck teeth, a worthy successor to the hateful, desperate literature of the antebellum South that showed African-Americans as ape-men who had climbed down from the trees to ravage white women. Made at the height of the Civil Rights movement, *Planet of the Apes* slyly pokes fun at such racist stereotypes in the U.S., yet the film's satire of racial tensions is merely subtext. The movie—in which three astronauts crash-land on a planet ruled by apes, only to discover, in one of the great final scenes in movie history, that it is post-Apocalypse Earth—was designed and executed chiefly as an allegory about war and the collapse of civilization.

Despite its camp sensibility, the film's pro-Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War proselytizing made it, along with *2001: A Space Odyssey* and the Russian classic *Solaris*, a leader of the first wave of A-level science-fiction films that were "serious" in both theme and presentation.

Setting ideology aside, the practical question director Franklin Schaffner grappled with during preproduction was, Could a man (movie Moses Charlton Heston, no less!) have a conversation with an ape without making audiences laugh? Schaffner discovered Heston could, thanks to the Herculean efforts of makeup mavens John Chambers and Dan Striepeke, whose FX work significantly advanced the art of makeup in the movies. Additionally, *The Planet of the Apes* became the first science-fiction film franchise since the old Flash Gordon serials of the '30s. The film has given birth to no less than four movie sequels, live-action and animated television series, a feature remake (now in preproduction, with Oliver Stone as executive producer) and enough toys to make George Lucas realize that merchandise was worth betting the Ranch on. ◆

17 ALIENS (U.S., 1986) WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JAMES CAMERON

"What do we do now?" wails Bill Paxton's jittery character midway through the second *Alien* film. That anguished plea, a cry from the pit of his soul, perfectly captures the desperation felt by the participants in Cameron's nightmarish battle against the film's title menace.

In the hands of another director, the story of a bunch of Marines storming a planet terrorized by rapacious aliens could have become a macho, swaggering shoot-'em-up. But Cameron's genius is evident in the realistic depiction of the grunts, who resemble the rainbow-coalition stock characters we've seen in a million war films but are clearly a step above stereotypes. Paxton's character may be a complainer, but he gives voice to every average guy who's been asked to clean up the big shots' messes—for low pay and little credit. These Marines aren't butch heroes out to conquer pesky alien varmints—they're average, likable Joes (and Janes) who just want to do their job and get the hell out.

Aliens' imitators, moreover, aren't just found in the past decade's action fare. Its influence can also be felt in modern conspiracy shows like *The X-Files*, in which the secretive, self-serving authorities assume that they know what's best for the rest of us. Cameron is a genius at depicting mayhem and a maestro at building tension, but what he's best at is tapping into our loneliness and our fear of the worst villain of all—claustrophobic oppression. ◆

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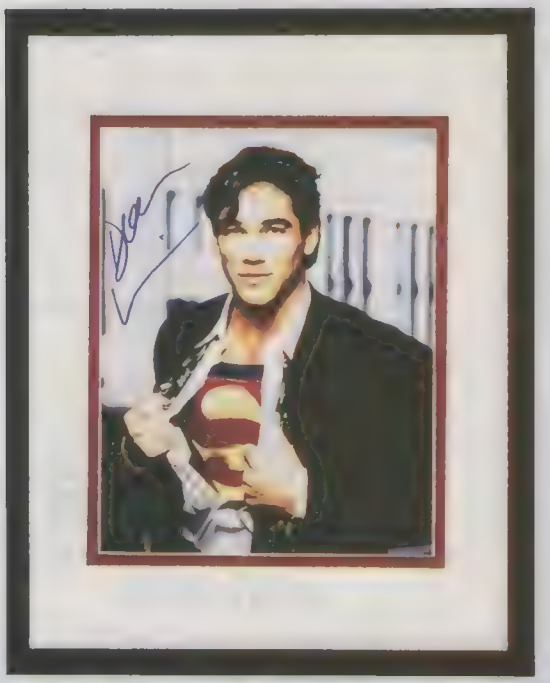

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18 THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN (U.S., 1970)

DIRECTED BY ROBERT WISE, SCREENPLAY BY NELSON GIDDING, BASED ON THE NOVEL BY MICHAEL CRICHTON

There are no laser guns in this movie. There are no single-minded hordes of destructive invaders. There aren't even human-seeming alien imposters. The scary thing in this movie is a crystalline life form that's glimpsed only through the pinhole viewer of a microscope. This alien substance lays waste to an entire town at the beginning of *The Andromeda Strain*, and a motley assortment of high-tech scientists are assembled at a secret underground research facility to find out just what it is and how it kills.

Not only is the plot a model of economy, this 1970 film is also a textbook on how to subtly create tension. The film operates on the assumption that what you don't know can indeed kill you—and possibly the rest of the world too—yet nothing about *The Andromeda Strain* ever seems hysterical or overly dramatic. Instead, we experience a gradual increase of tension as the characters descend several levels into the bunker-like research compound and are forced to scrub themselves ever cleaner and don ever-more hygienic attire before they enter the sacrosanct chamber where the deadly bug resides. Through this Dantean analogy, we experience their discomfort, their sense of alienation and their growing fear.

Some of the film's sets may look dated now, and the "cutting-edge" science depicted may be hopelessly out of date, but the tightly constructed story has both staying power and relevance. ◆

19 FORBIDDEN PLANET (U.S., 1958)

DIRECTED BY FRED M. WILCOX, SCREENPLAY BY CYRIL HUME

It's almost easier to come up with a list of things that are wrong with *Forbidden Planet* than things that are right with it: Aside from the lovably droll Robbie the Robot, the acting is uniformly wooden, the direction is lugubrious, the dialogue is hammy and characterization is a no-show. Why, then, should this film be considered a classic and one of the 20 most influential ever?

Because science fiction would look and sound a whole lot different if not for this *haute*-'50s remake of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. From the opening shot of a gleaming saucer crossing the screen to Robbie's hard-wired head to the otherworldly yelps and warbles that constitute the soundtrack, *Forbidden Planet* not only set the tone of the cinematic future, but also helped shape pop culture for decades to come.

Classic *Star Trek* was the most obvious heir to *Forbidden Planet*, and Kirk's lusty ways with the ladies and the short skirts modeled by the females of the Enterprise crew aren't the only recognizable elements lifted from the film. *Trek* also picked up on the film's twin themes of man's glorious destiny to tame the unknown and the threat humanity faces when people trust too much in their intellects. The film has permeated our culture in other ways, too: it's hard to hear the soundtrack without thinking of the effect it has had on pop music. And for a genre film whose goal was not making great Art but filling movie theater seats, *Forbidden Planet* contains some truly compelling imagery: Dr. Morbius' tour of the gigantic innards of the Krell laboratories echoes the majestic views occasionally glimpsed in *Star Wars*' interior Death Star scenes, and the effects work, especially the images of the invisible beast straining at the space soldiers' electric fence, still thrills after all these years.

It may not be perfect, but it's hard not to give *Forbidden Planet* credit as one of the first truly memorable post-war science fiction epics. ◆

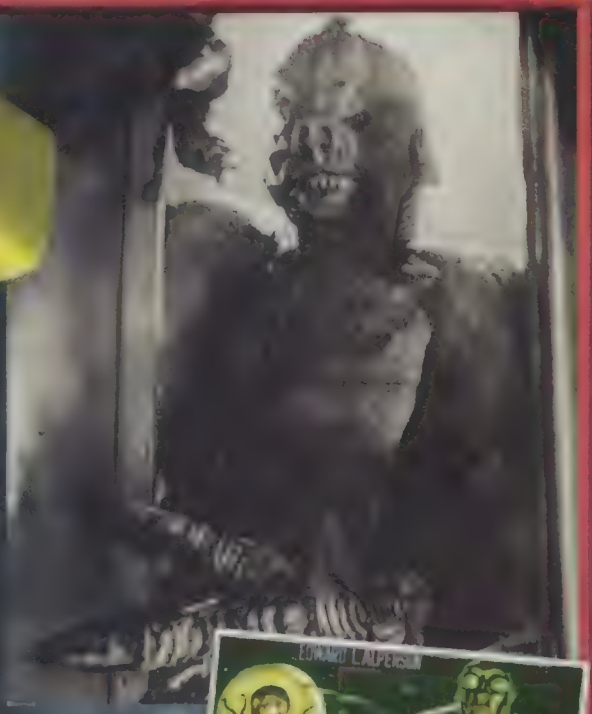
20 WAR OF THE WORLDS (U.S., 1953)

DIRECTED BY BY BYRON HASKIN, SCREENPLAY BY BARRE LYNDON, BASED ON THE NOVEL BY H.G. WELLS

After *The Thing From Another World* came calling, the stage was set for the next logical step—a full-scale invasion. And nothing can stop the relentless invaders from Mars in this swashbuckling, ultra-destructive film—not even the latest, most destructive A-bomb. Fortunately, the Martians are susceptible to the bacteria that infest our world, and in the end, it seems that "God, in His wisdom" has provided for us.

The stars of this film are, of course, the Martian warships. They look like glowing manta rays with dinosaur necks, and the Martians themselves, who are onscreen only for a short time, are memorable as well. Besides giving the makers of *Independence Day* a boatload of ideas, *War of the Worlds*, like all stellar sci-fi, has a poignant point to make—in this case, the implication is that far from being nature's most impressive creatures, humans are just another species clinging to one of the millions of rocks that float through a vast and lonely universe. ◆

THE LAST WORD



DETERMINING THE MOST Influential Science-Fiction Movie of All Time is no small task, and so we sought advice not only from film historians, video geeks and techheads, but also from proven talent in the field. The opinions they gave us were varied and insightful. Here's a sampling:

ROB COHEN

(*producer,* The Serpent and the Rainbow, The Running Man; *director,* Dragonheart, Daylight): "Kubrick's **2001: A Space Odyssey** was the first—everything that's been done since then in science fiction comes from **2001**. The use of Strauss in terms of presenting space as a beautiful, lyrical place, and the Monolith added a layer of mysticism to the genre. When you trace everything—technically, not storywise—that Ridley Scott did in **Alien**, or George Lucas did in **Star Wars**, it all definitely has its roots in the brilliant vision of Stanley Kubrick. I'm convinced it's the seminal science fiction film. It's where the genre split from its delightfully hokey past along the lines of **Forbidden Planet.** Suddenly it was like, 'Wow, we're in the major leagues now.'"

J. Michael Straczynski

(*creator,* Babylon 5): One of my favorites of all time is a film called **Seconds** [1966]. It was a John Frankenheimer film starring Rock Hudson. There's a man [played by John Randolph] who's approached by a corporation that tells him, "We will rebuild your life—we'll create a death and make it look like you. We'll create a new life for you." [The film] examines paranoia and identity and ego, and it has some great horror elements. It has the single scariest ending I've ever seen in any movie ever.

CHRIS CARTER

(*creator,* The X-Files *and* Millennium): "**Alien** was brilliant. There were real people aboard that ship, not stereotypes, and it was truly the product of one man's vision [Ridley Scott]. He really took his time in the beginning of the film—it took about 45 minutes before they even got into the little pod [containing the alien]. So it's all character set-up and mood and atmosphere. Then the movie just ratchets up the suspense from there; the intensity builds dramatically. It's quite simple, but wonderfully done."

HARLAN ELLISON

(*SF's graying Angry Young Man had a phalanx of picks, some conventional, many unique—***Charly**, **Wild in the Streets**, **Metropolis**, **2001**, **Alphaville**, *to name a few. He was, however, only willing to offer commentary on the screen adaptation of his classic story,* **A Boy and His Dog**): "I think that's a pivotal film, man. There would not have been a **Mad Max** if this movie hadn't been made."

BOB BURNS

(*Host, The Sci-Fi Channel's "Bob's Basement" segment; production assistant, the '50s cult monster movie* It! The Terror From Beyond Space): Of course, I'm biased toward **It!**

The Terror From Beyond Space, but [screenwriter] Dan O'Bannon even admitted that *Alien* was based on it. You've got people trapped in a space ship being killed one by one. You don't get much closer than that. It's actually a pretty fair film for a cheapy little movie. It was a hard film to shoot mainly on account of poor ol' Crash Corrigan, bless his heart. He was a nice guy and a fair actor, but he was an old drunk. He was bagged most of the time we did the film."

JOHN de LANCIE:

(*Q, Star Trek: The Next Generation/Voyager*): "**Invaders From Mars** is the first science fiction film I saw. That scared the hell out of me. It really did. I must have been about 10 years old. When the boy wakes up at the end and everything is happening again for real, I freaked. I *ran* out of the theater." ◆

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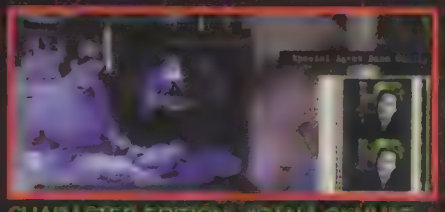

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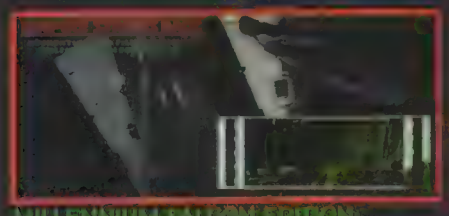

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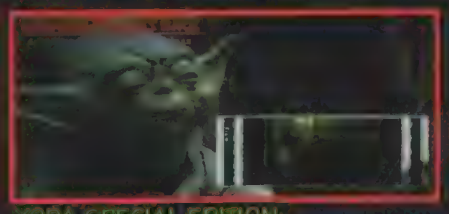

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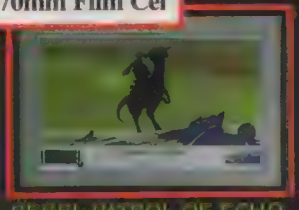

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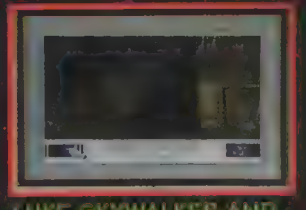

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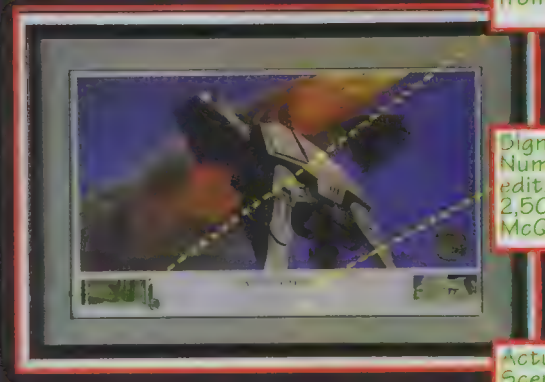

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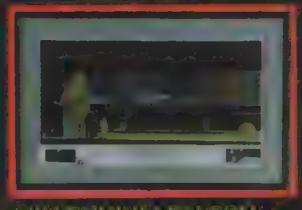

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UNFRIENDLY SKIES

COFFEE, TEA OR TERROR? LAUREN HOLLY BATTLES RAY LIOTTA, THE PASSENGER FROM HELL, IN TURBULENCE

by Beth Laski

Ray Liotta doesn't like to fly.

Before he even walked down the tarmac and got on the 747, his palms were sweating. Suddenly, he was 35 feet off the ground and blinded by several high-intensity lights, as thunder and lightning crashed ominously in the background. Then, his worst nightmare came true: The plane began to tilt from side-to-side, rock up and down and, eventually, it flipped over.

Fortunately for Liotta, that wasn't his last experience on the New York to L.A. redeye—it was just a typical day on the set of *Turbulence*, an upcoming airborne thriller in which he plays a deranged prisoner bent on crashing a plane.

"It was nerve-wracking being in a 747 that was turned totally upside down," Liotta says of the stomach-churning shoot. "The turbulence was very real and the plane was bouncing up and down and turning around all the time. You got used to it, but it took a little while because it was disorienting."

Liotta may have become accustomed to the rocking and rolling aircraft during the filming of *Turbulence*, but imagine navigating all those twists and turns while wearing high heels.

"I have to admit, I was absolutely terrified," says Lauren Holly, who plays a heroic flight attendant who battles Liotta's deranged character in the upcoming MGM film. "I would wait on my mark in a stairwell, they would call action and [the plane] would start rocking. I would come out and run down, and then they flipped it. The first time, I was so panicked! I had to do it 11 times, and by that time I was sort of having a good time. It was a little bit like riding in an amusement park."

The ride for Liotta and Holly, along with co-star Hector Elizondo, lasted about three months and took them from Los Angeles to New York and from Hollywood soundstages to airborne film shoots 35,000 feet above ground. "The battle in this movie was conquering the complexities and the details," according to director Bob Butler. "It wasn't with the front office or the producers—they all gave me tremendous support."

Butler is a veteran director of respected TV fare like *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman*, *Hill Street Blues* and *Moonlighting*, but he says that *Turbulence* provided him with some daunting new challenges. First among his priorities was bringing the film's characters into the foreground and not letting them get overwhelmed by the antics of the storm-tossed aircraft. "If you don't identify with the people or their story, then all the hardware is worth nothing," he contends. "I want the audience to wonder when the piper is going to be paid, when the violent, ugly, horrific guy is going to show up. It took a certain detachment or maybe selfishness to not be daunted by the money being spent or the size of the production."

In the film, Liotta's character, Ryan Weaver, is being extradited to Los Angeles on Christmas Eve to face trial on charges of rape and murder. "He [feels] he's going to die one way or another on this flight, and he's decided to have a good time doing it," Liotta says.

In addition to Weaver, the plane's only passengers are another prisoner and four federal marshals. The flight crew includes Teri Halloran, Holly's character, who must save herself from the machinations of Weaver, an alleged serial killer. Hector Elizondo, who plays a detective assigned to guard the criminal, has the unpleasant task of telling Halloran that all the people Weaver has been accused of killing have been women who look just like her. Undaunted, the brave flight attendant not only holds her own against Weaver, she actually lands the gigantic plane herself.

"Lauren plays our hero, and she certainly was our lucky choice for the role," Butler says. "She's a terribly smart gal and very classy as an individual." Although *Turbulence* marks Holly's first starring role in a movie, she is probably best known for her role in *Dumb and Dumber*, in which she played the woman pursued cross-country by the intellectually challenged duo of Jim Carrey and Jeff Daniels.

Holly's role in *Turbulence* required a lot of physical activity, and the actress says she has the bruises to prove it. "It's like I have war wounds," she laughs. "It was funny because we had one instance where I had to take a fall, and they were going to have the doubles do it, but I didn't want them to. I started wondering about that on take 20, but I [still] wanted to try it.

"I think the physical stuff really did intrigue me in this movie," Holly adds. "And also the fact that she's the hero—she lands the plane. I was really worried because at one point we were all involved in some rewriting, and I kept waiting for them to knock on my door and say, 'By the way, you're not going to land the plane.' But they never said that.

PLANE SPEAKING: Liotta tries the forceful approach when requesting Holly's full attention

"It is scary to think how somebody could be taken in by a man, thinking he is charming and finding out that he is anything but," the actress continues. "I'm not sure than anyone can play that better than Ray Liotta, because he has those beautiful blue eyes that are so piercing, and he's very sweet and charming. Then all of a sudden, in the blink of an eye, he can just turn on a dime, and those same blue eyes become something very different—and very scary. The only thing I can say is that I think the audience will believe why I was kind of taken in and why I didn't [realize] he was more foe than friend."

Turbulence is Liotta's 11th film, but the smoldering actor is probably best known for playing mob operative Henry Hill in Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas*. Butler, who worked with Liotta years ago on a television pilot called *Our Family Honor*, speaks highly of the intense actor, who has an uncanny knack for revealing a character's dark side.

"His [range] is really broad," the director notes. "You will see him being terribly soft and convincing, and then you will see him as a delirious mad man. I think he had the most gleeful time being the most awful, killing person."

"My character is a regular person—she slowly rises to the occasion, and it becomes about survival. It's basically, 'How do I save my skin; How do I get out?'"

— Lauren Holly

If Liotta is note-perfect in his depiction of a killer, the producers tried hard to make *Turbulence*'s plane scenes ultra-realistic. Not only did the production rent a real 747 for certain interior scenes, technicians also put several sets on top of gimbals, or mechanized devices that can move film sets in order to simulate the effects of an aerial storm on the hapless aircraft.

"The gimbals are like [moveable] dance floors or playing cards," Butler explains. "We kept chopping the plane up and putting it on the different gimbals. In certain scenes when the weather was supposed to be the most turbulent, the plane was divided into 10 sections. The scheduling of the 10 or more pieces of the plane on the different gimbals became very complex."

The largest rotary gimbal, a 150-ton behemoth that was 35 feet high, was designed to turn a 70-foot section of the plane 360 degrees. It could also turn the 747 replica upside down, and the device was able to immobilize the plane segment at any point in its churning cycle. Special effects coordinator Al Di Sarro says that particular gimbal is the largest ever built for a film production.

"The rotary gimbal was the biggest headache, but it was also the most spectacular to watch," he recalls. "When we cranked up the 300 horsepower electric motor and saw those seven 35-foot steel rings start turning, every light on the Culver City Studio lot went dim. But it really worked beautifully, even with 70 feet of plane on it, just like the computer told us it would."

A MOVING EXPERIENCE: Technicians made the plane rock

A one-tenth scale model of the jet was built for use in filming the plane's storm sequences, and the production also converted a Los Angeles warehouse into the control room of the fictional Transcontinental Crisis Management Center.

That particular set may remind audiences of the crisis center that was set up after TWA's flight 800 crashed last July, killing all 230 people aboard. Indeed, *Turbulence*'s trailers were pulled from circulation shortly after the air disaster, and the release date of the action-thriller was moved back from late summer to Jan. 31 out of respect for Flight 800's victims and their families. "It would have been truly gross and insensitive of us to continue a boastful, fun-loving trailer at such a tragic time," Butler says.

Now that the tragedy of the TWA flight has faded a bit from public consciousness, the film's principals are hoping the nail-biting intensity of the thriller's endgame will draw audiences in. "The thing that really intrigued me is that [my character] is a regular person—she's not immediately fighting back and figuring everything out," Holly offers. "She slowly rises to the occasion, and then it becomes about survival. She's not MacGyver or someone like that. She doesn't figure out that the tray behind the seat could be a shield to [block] bullets or anything like that. It's just basically, 'How do I save my skin, how do I get out?'" ◆

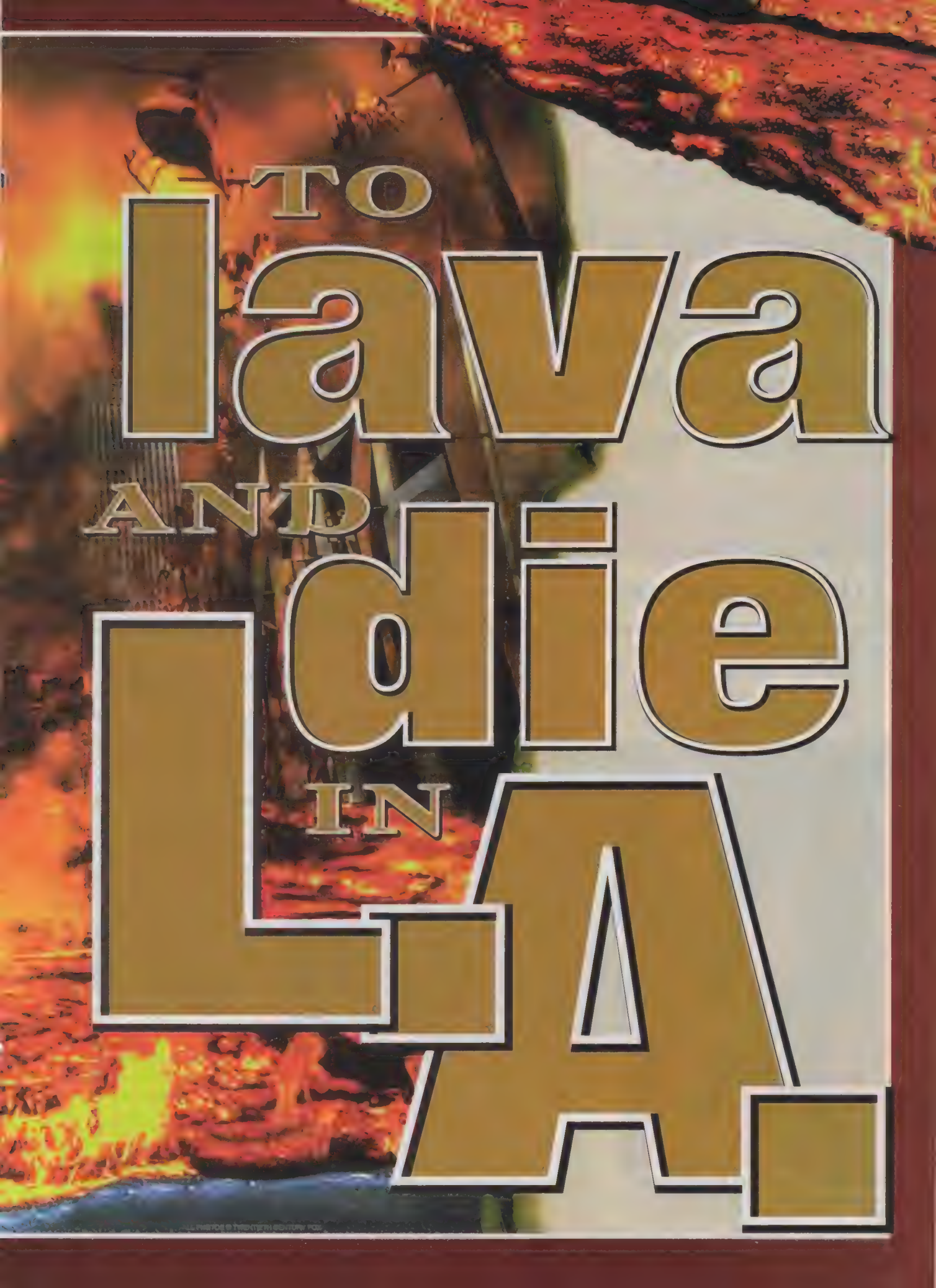
FIRES, FLOODS AND RIOTS HAVE BATTERED THE CITY OF ANGELS IN RECENT YEARS, BUT NOTHING COULD PREPARE LOCAL RESIDENTS FOR THE MAKING OF VOLCANO

BY BETH LASKI

Los Angeles is no stranger to disaster—earthquakes, firestorms, floods, mudslides, riots and the O.J. Simpson trial have all plagued the beleaguered metropolis in recent years. But in February, the City of Angels might experience the most cataclysmic crisis of all when a volcano erupts and pours an endless stream of fiery lava through the streets.

The good news is that the volcano and the red-hot gooey stuff gushing from it were created on a computer screen and pose no real danger to the disaster-weary residents of Los Angeles. But the city's residents did put up with their share of inconveniences while the $70 million Twentieth Century Fox film *Volcano* was shooting on and around L.A.'s notoriously crowded thoroughfares. Traffic nightmares plagued drivers during five weekends when, for the first time ever, city officials allowed major streets and intersections—some of them surrounding a top hospital and a major mall—to be closed. All this in the name of entertainment—and, of course, commerce.

The making of *Volcano*, which stars Tommy Lee Jones and indie movie regular Anne Heche, may have brought car-obsessed Los Angeles to a grinding halt for a few weekends, but the high blood pressure


TO
lava
AND
die
IN
L.A.

Los Angeles gets severely trashed in this movie, which has been a source of great pleasure to everybody.

-director
Mick Jackson

FIRE STOPPERS: Tommy Lee Jones and Anne Heche dangle over lava (above); Jones with his on-screen offspring, Gaby Hoffman (top)

and frustration experienced by Angelenos caught in worse-than-normal traffic snarls was nothing compared to what the studio execs who bid on the film's script endured. As Laura Ziskin, president of Fox 2000, a division of Twentieth Century Fox, recalls, L.A.'s big-screen destruction started with a "lonely writer sitting at his computer. You know those writers, they write things like, 'Then the war started,' or, in this case, 'And then the volcano exploded on Wilshire Boulevard, and lava bombs flew out of the La Brea Tar Pits.' And we all read it and say, 'Gosh, this is a great idea for a movie.'" And since the industry, following the lead of its surroundings, has been gripped by disaster fever, Jerome D. Armstrong's script, unlike many hotly contested screenplays that spend years in development hell, was sold amid a spasm of intense interest and went into production last August, less than a year after Fox had emerged as the owner of the hot property.

IN A RACE against the clock—and the film's molten competition, Universal's upcoming *Dante's Peak*—as many as 400 people spent 11 weeks recreating a 17.2-acre chunk of downtown Los Angeles at an aircraft plant in Torrance, Calif. A huge chunk of the facility's parking lot, lined with replicas of the La Brea Tar Pits, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the American Cancer Society building and a famous billboard of would-be starlet Angelyne, became one of the largest movie sets ever constructed in the L.A. area.

"At one point, a lava bomb goes flying out of the Tar Pits and hits the Angelyne sign, knocking her head off, and the head goes flying down, almost hitting Tommy Lee Jones' car," says Andrew Davis, the director (*The Fugitive*) who acted as a producer on *Volcano*. "[Jones] squeals out of the way, trying to escape this falling sign, and at the same time he has to escape the lava that has started billowing up from underground."

Real sites featured in the film include MacArthur Park, the popular Beverly Center shopping mall and a Metro Rail subway tunnel. Perhaps the biggest location coup the producers scored, however, was the city's brand-new, state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center. The production was allowed to film key scenes in the high-tech complex, which is designed to withstand a 8.3-magnitude earthquake.

In the film, Oscar-winner Jones stars as the rugged Mike Roark, the city's emergency management czar, who tries to protect Los Angeles from a volcano that erupts at the La Brea Tar Pits—a threat, unlike earthquakes and brush fires, that has little likelihood of happening in Southern California. Soon, lava is flowing down Wilshire Boulevard, and as the crisis mounts, Roark calls in university seismologist Dr. Amy Barnes (Heche), whose academic knowledge of volcanic eruptions may help him deal with the disaster. Don Cheadle, best known as Denzel Washington's trigger-happy pal in *Devil in a Blue Dress*, co-stars as Emmit Reese, Roark's ambitious second-in-command.

"Every day was like going to war," says producer Neil Moritz, referring to the ash,

fire, smoke, heat and rain that the crew and cast battled day after day as buildings were torched, palm trees ignited, cars and buses blown up and windows shattered by the flow of superheated rock down city streets. Each night, a special effects crew of 115 lit up the night sky with thousands of gallons of liquid propane so that cameras could capture the night-time disaster zone that was *Volcano*'s fictional L.A. All the fire, smoke and propane used by the production required the most extensive fire permit the city had ever granted to a single film production.

"What we do in one night on this movie is what is normally [done in] the finale of a movie," according to Marty Bresin, the project's visual effects supervisor. "We light up buildings, 10 to 20 palm trees, a couple of cars–every single night."

One night in September, as the film's producers were giving reporters a tour of the Wilshire Boulevard set, Bresin told the assembled members of the press that he and his crew would give "a little demonstration of what we do out here." As reporters jockeyed for the best viewing position, two buildings were set on fire and almost instantly were engulfed in flames. Two powerful explosions that blew out dozens of windows followed. The media types, who initially clamored for prime spots on the front line of the action, quickly backed up.

They needn't have worried. Bresin's crew safely set the buildings ablaze by using specially constructed conduits hidden inside the windows. These conduits, hooked up to propane trucks parked further down the street, were ignited, sending flames upward through the buildings. According to the film's producers, *Volcano* crews used an average of 1,700 gallons of propane each night to torch buildings and palm trees. Each tree had a pipeline carrying propane up to the top fronds, and jets spewed the fuel out the pipes and onto the tree trunk. As volcanic mayhem spreads across L.A. in the film, "the trees are always ablaze and the tops of the trees light up like birthday candles," explains Davis. "Every day, a crew comes in and replaces the palm fronds so we can burn them again the next day."

And every day there were crews touching up the scorched buildings, cars and trucks and cleaning up the make-believe volcanic ash that littered the streets. "We did a lot of experimentation [with the ash], comparing the paper [that was eventually chosen] to various other things that we could have used to look like real ash," Davis says. "We looked at stock footage of real ash and found something that seemed to match really well on film, and at the same time was completely healthy for all the crew to breathe. Already we've used something like 5,000 pounds of ash on the picture, and probably have another 5,000 pounds to go before we're done." Despite the best efforts of the production team, however, the ash, which was blown onto the set by giant industrial fans, lingered in the lungs and eyes of set visitors for hours.

Though the crew took stringent safety precautions, Anne Heche says it's still a little unnerving when a "50-foot-tall burning palm tree falls a couple of feet in front of you." On the other hand, earthquakes don't worry the intrepid actress as much. "When I was in the earthquake here a few years ago, I laughed when I fell off my bed. But I don't deal with [disaster] the same way in this movie. Now I'm scared."

According to Tommy Lee Jones, a veteran of action fare like *The Fugitive* and the upcoming action-comedy *Men in Black*, hazards like lava bombs and burning palm trees are all in a day's work. "We do this for a living," Jones offered during a quick break from shooting a scene with Heche. "It's safer for us than for you—don't try this in your backyard."

WHILE DAVIS IS forthcoming regarding such tricks as how the fires were controlled and how paper particles were fashioned to look like real volcanic ash, he's downright secretive when questioned about how *Volcano*'s main ingredient—the lava—was created.

"It's movie magic," he says cryptically. His fellow *Volcano* colleagues follow his lead. "The lava is made from 'secret sauce,'" jokes Bresin, who does allow that "one of the challenges was making it look like it's 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit."

Finally, British-born director Mick Jackson comes clean. "The lava was the toughest challenge," he admits. "You can't just send out for a truck-load of lava and have it delivered to the set. Some of it's using physical goop lit in a very special way, but most of it is computer-generated."

Up until recently, lava was difficult to create—even on the computer screen—because of the difficulty in working with liquid images. "We couldn't have made this movie a year ago as we're making it now," says producer Neil Moritz. "The software only recently became available."

"We can do things now that weren't possible a month ago. We're pushing the envelope pretty far," adds Bresin.

"Lava by day looks like blood or tomato soup, by night it glows orange and red, and it's hot enough to melt steel," offers Rick Hazlett, the volcanologist who acted as a consultant on the film. "On flat ground, it creeps along slowly, so slowly that you might be deceived." Hazlett says one of the most interesting things about lava, which he says is depicted accurately in the movie, is its unpredictability due to its relationship with unseen volcanic activity under the

earth. Another realistic detail shown in the film, Hazlett adds, is the outbreak of earthquake activity that precedes the onset of the volcanic eruption.

"What we really tried to make is as realistic a movie as possible," says producer Moritz. "We know it's a huge leap to imagine a volcano in Los Angeles, and because of that, we really tried to ground it in reality. I hope that's where our movie is different than other movies."

Toward that end, director Jackson says that extra-special attention was paid to developing the characters so the audience will care about their well-being. The actors "tend to get squeezed out of a lot of big effects movies in favor of the effects. I tried to make the characters more than just superheroes. They're not Arnold Schwarzeneggers. They're not Jean-Claude Van Dammes. Tommy Lee Jones is playing a regular family guy who has a troubled marriage. His daughter [Gaby Hoffman] is visiting him on the weekend and is caught in the middle of this. We don't automatically know that these people are going to get out of trouble."

Certainly the deck is stacked against Roark and his hardy band of disaster specialists. In one scene, Roark tries to use his previous expertise in dealing with Midwestern floods to control the killer lava flowing down the streets. He gathers together a group of police and firemen to push over a bus in an effort to dam the molten goo, and at the same time, he's working with Dr. Barnes (Heche) to save a man whose truck has been hit by a lava bomb, which resembles a giant, deadly Easter egg. As they work to save the injured truck driver, a fiery palm tree falls with a tremendous thud and traps the group as the lava continues its ominous progress toward them. Eventually a hook-and-ladder team hoists the injured man, and Roark and Barnes hold on for dear life as they are carried over the lava by a ladder and eventually reach safety.

THE BURNING SEASON: Jones and Heche (top) consider their options as L.A. and its citizens go up in smoke

Jackson says that, throughout the action-packed shooting, Jones was "refreshing to deal with because he has an extremely strong bullshit detector. He's very straight down the middle. He's very common-sense [oriented] and has a lot of humanity."

According to the director, having regular-guy Jones in the lead will keep *Volcano* from being just another disaster movie. "There's a tendency in some disaster movies just to be a thrill ride," Jackson notes. "You pay $7.50, you sit back passively in your seat, and you're taken through a series of explosions and various things. I tried to shoot this like a documentary, like it's really happening. I'm trying to give it a very visceral quality so it's not like you have a privileged, God's-eye view of the action—you're *in* the action."

Elevating the film from typical disaster fare, says Jackson, isn't just Jones' leavening presence, but the director's own subtextual take on the fiery goings-on. Jackson says that the angry volcano could be seen as a metaphor for the tensions—racial, ethnic, economic and social—that plague somg-ridden City of Angels. "The city was going to blow for one reason or another and at some time or another," says the helmer, who says his "love-hate relationship" with Los Angeles began when he was directing the 1991 Steve Martin romantic comedy *L.A. Story*. "Los Angeles gets severely trashed in [*Volcano*], which has been a source of great pleasure to everybody. It's now a national pastime now to see L.A. get trashed." ◆

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X-FILES creator Chris Carter may have begun his career in comedy, but with his violent new serial-killer drama MILLENNIUM, we only get to see...

The DARK Side of the LOON

by edward gross

Chris Carter seems tired. He is, of course, looking at yet another reporter bearing a notebook full of questions, but that's not the reason for his listlessness. He simply needs to sleep once in awhile.

A few months ago, Carter was working almost around the clock on the third season of *The X-Files*, on which he serves as executive producer. But those relentless 15- and 18-hour days were a mere warm-up for his present schedule. Now, he is not only overseeing the fourth season of *The X-Files* with his usual attention to detail, he is also guiding the inaugural season of the horror-drama *Millennium*, his new Fox series that has opened to solid ratings and generally positive reviews.

How does he manage to cram two full-time jobs into each day?

"I don't know how I'm doing it," he admits with a sigh. "All I can do is work. I deal with the shows in a very hands-on way, and because the shows are very movie-like, they take a lot of attention to detail, unlike some other drama shows on television. But the secret of success is preparing the shows to be done well, and having the scripts just right, and having all the crew ready to go.

THE EVIL INSIDE: To catch killers, Carter's Frank Black (Lance Henriksen) must look inside himself

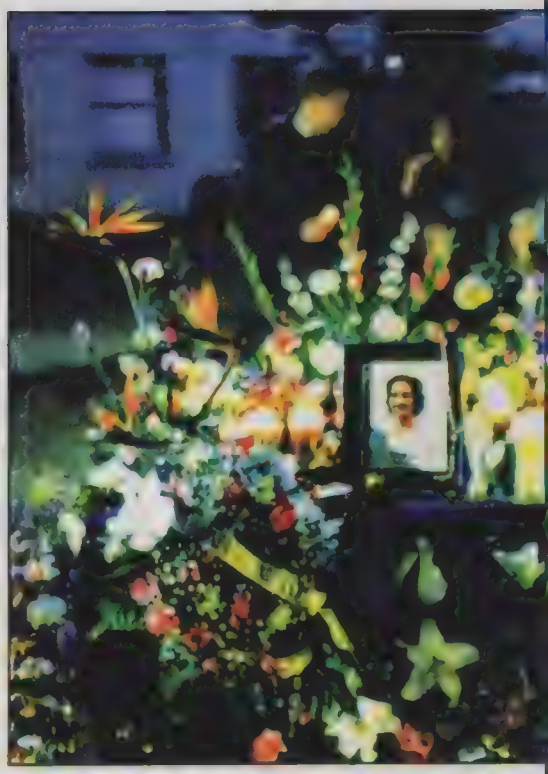
There are many ways a show can fail. There are very few ways it can succeed, and so I think that is what's frightening to me—the prospect of trying to do two weekly shows at that level of quality. It was really a matter of finding the right people I could bring along with me, who can help me to do the good work."

And there's no doubt where those people find their inspiration. Special effects coordinator Bob Comer says no one has higher standards than Carter himself.

"Chris works very hard and puts a lot of detail into his stories. I've worked on a lot of episodic TV shows where you have a concept with three or four different writer/producers involved and everyone is diluting that concept. I remember when we saw the pilot [of *Millennium*], Chris asked me what I thought of it and I said, 'I felt like going to take a shower and talking to my mom on the telephone.' If it affects you, it's working, and his stuff is definitely affecting. Chris has a very strong sense of what he wants."

And what he wants, of course, is another successful show like *The X-Files* that not only entertains people but makes them think about their world and themselves. And he knows the pressure is on. Hollywood loves to see the new 500-pound gorilla take a fall, and they're all wondering if Carter—who is unquestionably the biggest producer in television right now—is a one-hit wonder. The example of Gene Roddenberry looms large: The *Star Trek* creator made numerous forays into features and TV, but he was never able to find success outside the confines of Starfleet.

"I think there are very few good TV series ideas," admits Carter. "I believe that is a fact and a reality, so it's a question you're always asking yourself. It has less to do with the success of *The X-Files* than it does with the business itself, and the rate of failure."



LAUGH, CLOWN, LAUGH: In Chris Carter's world, clowns logically lead to funerals

Not only are the odds of a second consecutive mega-success stacked against Carter, but his choice of material simply isn't what typically finds mainstream acceptance. Even more so than *The X-Files*, *Millennium* sets out not simply to engage but to horrify. The show examines the most vicious aspects of humanity—crazed killers abound in the series, many of whom make Jeffrey Dahmer look like a lightweight. And while *The X-Files* utilizes its creator's sly sense of humor (Carter got his start writing Disney comedies like *Meet the Munceys*), *Millennium* is almost unbearably dark. The show's protagonist, criminal profiler Frank Black (Lance Henriksen), tracks murderers who bury their victims alive with their mouths sewn shut, nuke them in industrial microwaves or burn them at the stake. There are no otherworldly explanations offered—Black, unlike Fox Mulder, knows these horrors are the product of the human mind.

"There are a lot of similarities between the two shows," says co-producer Frank Spotnitz, one of the few people working on both *The X-Files* and *Millennium*. "They are both very strong narrative shows. *The X-Files* has more obvious opportunities to be visual and cinematic, because you are dealing with such fantastic subject matter every week. In *Millennium*, you have to be much more clever in finding those images that are going to grab people and stick in their minds. That's the challenge every week, to find clever and interesting ways to visualize the way a killer sees the world."

That we want—or need—to visualize and understand such horror is what's so fascinating about the recent serial-killer trend on TV and the big screen. Leo Braudy, a professor at the University of Southern California and author of *The World in a Frame: What We See in Films*, says, "The monstrous has become less obviously monstrous and more ordinary in recent years. It now wears a very ordinary face. There's also a moralistic side that has dropped away, which makes it even more horrible. You could always distance yourself in traditional horror from the victim because the

victim had always done something that merited being ripped limb from limb, whereas now the serial killer picks victims almost arbitrarily. All in all, films and shows like *Millennium* are about the loss of protection. It's hard to be truly scared of some exotic-looking person with pointed teeth wearing a tuxedo and cape. But when it's not a vampire but [someone who] looks familiar in the way a serial killer does, you can't defend yourself in the same way."

Such are the terrors that keep people up at night with all the lights on. But that isn't to say that Carter wants to leave viewers feeling vulnerable and alone.

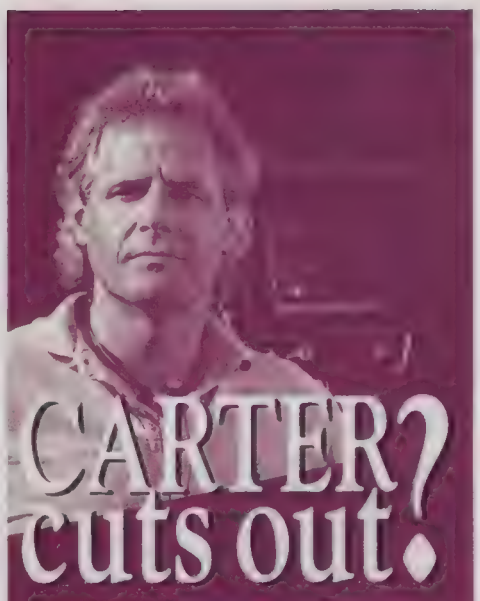
"From the darkness in life I'm always looking for light," he says with sincerity. "I think I have a strong sense of people's baser instincts. The idea that we actually have any control over the forces in our lives is relative. Nature always wins, so this darkness is always part of how I look at the world. At the same time, I have faith that we can get through it all. There are ways, but you have to go out there and find them. That's where these characters, who have so many good qualities and traits and a sense of morality, fit into the whole thing."

Millennium certainly offers the grimmest depictions of humanity of any show on TV, yet Carter and his creative staff insist the series is ultimately optimistic. So far, Frank Black's ability to profile serial killers has been shown simply through flash-cuts suggestive of visions, but Carter insists that that is merely a cinematic substitution for the education and experience that allows him to reach certain conclusions about serial killers. There is a darkness to the character; he truly understands the disturbed murderers he encounters. But he is not like them.

"I think Frank is actually the most heroic character on television," says Carter. "He is a person who puts everything above himself—his family, his friends, his work—and he is carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders in a truly heroic fashion. The family is the reason for doing this, too, and I think that's the bright center of the show. It's the reason for doing the show—the idea that you've got to protect this world for the next generation."

Megan Gallagher, who portrays Frank's wife, Catherine, believes the early success of the show has to do with Carter's ability as a storyteller.

"What Chris realizes is what not to tell you," says the actress, who was seen last season as Thomas Veil's deceiving wife in *Nowhere Man*. "He will give you what you need, and he also engages your imagination in a wonderful way. I'm not saying this show isn't violent, but it's violent in a way that forces you to participate, which is why it's more terrifying. Instead of showing you a killer waiting for his victim, and then killing and slashing and murdering and shooting and doing whatever he's doing, it's showing



CARTER? cuts out.

WHAT WITH LONG hours and abandoned vacations, burnout was probably inevitable. And the result could be that Chris Carter has only one more season of *The X-Files* in him after this one.

"That's my current plan," he says. "I think five years is a good length of time to do something, and I think you should have a plan and these things should go a certain period. You should basically know the race that you're running and where the finish line is. I have said to both David [Duchovny] and Gillian [Anderson] that I just want to do five really good years and then be able to look back and say that we did our best work. That's why I haven't left the show. If they will devote their five years to it, so will I. Anything past that is gravy to me. Who knows, maybe that will change. Maybe I'll feel like I've got legs under me at the end of five years. Right now, though, that's what I'm contracted to do."

And what about the planned *X-Files* feature film?

"Fox would like to do the feature before the finish of the run of the show," he says. "That's a subject of some debate right now, but I think that whatever I do, I want to do [a feature] so that it strengthens the show, not weakens it. There are no real details, though I have some ideas as to how I want to incorporate a movie into the show's mythology arc and also have it be a stand-alone [story] worthy of the big screen. The bottom line is that it will have to have some mythology elements in it, because you can't do a Mulder and Scully story without some sort of sense of what they do, where they've come from, what they've seen. It won't be true to the characters if you don't acknowledge it."—*E.G.*

you the aftermath. Then what you're forced to do is use your imagination, which is much more powerful."

Frank Spotnitz was drawn to the project not only by another opportunity to create fascinating stories and characters, but also by the subject's potential to address the desensitizing effect of the media's coverage of crime and violence, a goal he recognizes won't be easy.

"I used to work the graveyard shift on Sunday nights for UPI," he says, "and my job was to take all the fatalities and write a round-up story. After a while, all of the murders I read about just became something that I accepted. When did the unacceptable become acceptable, you know? What this show is trying to do is remind

"I think I have a strong sense of people's baser instincts. The idea that we actually have any **CONTROL** over the forces in our lives is relative. Nature always wins, so this **DARKNESS** is always part of how I look at the world."—**Chris Carter**

people that this is intolerable. It's trying to do just the opposite of what some people might accuse us of doing. We're walking a very fine line because we want to show how gruesome these crimes are, yet also show that Frank is a man who is trying to make a life for himself and his family. That's what I thought was so beautiful about the pilot. There were these two worlds—the one where the crimes were taking place, and the other in Frank's bright yellow house—existing side by side. I think it's strange the two can co-exist, but they do."

"The real difference between *The X-Files* and *Millennium*," says director David Nutter, who has helmed episodes of both series, "is that [in *Millennium*], you're not throwing the paranormal at [viewers]. Once you get them to where they care about the characters, then you show them the hell outside the window. It's vitally important to show that violence does come at a cost. It's important not to glamorize it. And so it's

important that Frank Black still wants a good, wholesome life with his child, puppies and a bright yellow house."

The children, puppies and bright yellow houses will help keep the show from becoming a serial-killer-of-the-week show, a situation that Frank Spotnitz says the *Millennium* team is dedicated to avoiding. "Every time we come up with a story," he says, "we think, 'What can we do that we haven't done before?' We're trying to find different things to say each week. Obviously, murder is going to play a role just as it does in any crime series, but it's not going to be just serial killers."

As an example, Spotnitz points to the episode "Kingdom Come," in which a man loses his family to a fire and, in turn, loses his faith in God. He soon becomes unstable and begins killing clergymen.

"The killer has gotten into a church and is about to blow it up," explains Winrich Kolbe, who directed the episode. "Frank gets in and begins to talk with the man and tells him that he, too, has doubts, that he is not a good Christian and has rarely been to church, but he still thinks about [spirituality]. Basically, he brings that person down from the precipice he's sitting on and says, 'In a way, we are all struggling with our faith.' It's rather well-done. We're not just dealing with some son-of-a-bitch who wants to blow you away. We're dealing with issues that involve all of us."

And that, says Carter, is why he decided to securely anchor *Millennium* in reality.

"Everything that's real can be scary," he offers. "That's my problem with science fiction, generally. If there's an attempt to scare me in a science-fiction [show], it usually doesn't seem as if it is taking place in any kind of world that I can reference. So it doesn't scare me. I think *Millennium* touches on our very real fear of violent death, our fascination with minds that don't work like ours and our own innate sense of evil. That's what Frank Black has, the ability to tap into the part of our nature that we suppress or has been civilized out of us."

Of course, such an ability can't always be so easy to turn on and off.

"Frank Black's talent also has a long tradition," says Professor Braudy. "It's a Sherlock Holmes talent—to put yourself in the mind of the criminal. At one point in the Holmes novels, Watson says, 'You're able to do what you do because you can pick out details and use reason.' Holmes replies, 'That wouldn't help at all if I didn't have a criminal mind myself.' That's a basic detective ancestry. The detective just happens to be on the law's side, but in actuality he has the potential to become that which he pursues." ◆

CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS

Despite *Voyager*'s tepid ratings, Kate Mulgrew is firmly in control of her career

by Edward Gross

"I need your face," she says, betraying perhaps a hint of vulnerability.

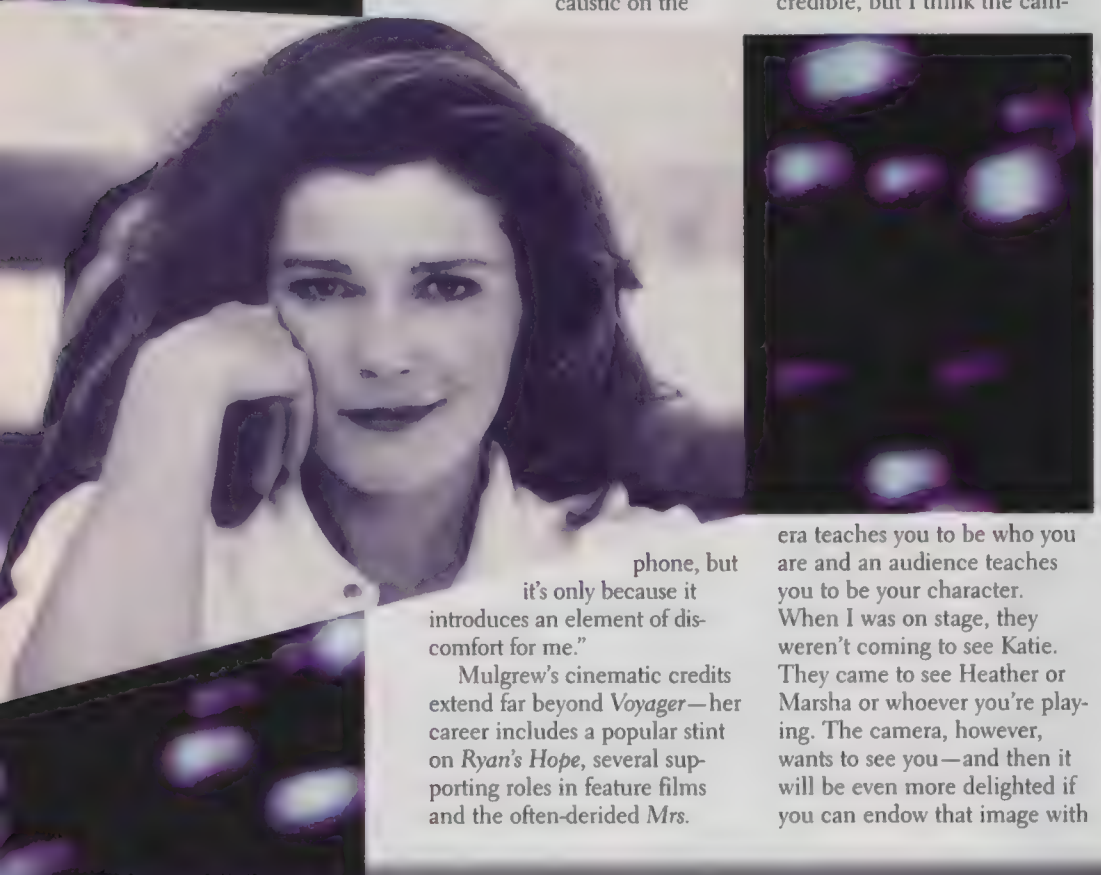
There's a pause, and I can sense her leaning forward, perhaps expectantly. The long-distance phone connection crackles, and her voice comes through again. "I really need your chemistry," she soothes. "That's what works for me—that energy. I feed off of it. That's why I went into theater."

Kate Mulgrew, you see, likes an audience—she likes to see what kind of response she can get.

Unfortunately, the actress doesn't get to trod the boards much anymore, what with the grueling schedule of *Star Trek: Voyager*. But she did appear on UPN's live 30th anniversary tribute to *Trek* last fall, which was the impetus for her sentimental meditation on the theatrical life. The plan had been for the cast of *Frasier* to appear on stage during the *Trek* event, adorned in Starfleet uniforms and performing in character. But Kelsey Grammer's well-publicized admittance into a rehab center nearly derailed the segment, until Mulgrew, understanding in her bones that the show must go on, stepped in to take center stage, playing her Capt. Kathryn Janeway to the time-warped *Frasier* gang.

Mulgrew's appearance, as hard as it may be to believe, marked the first time that a *Star Trek* cast member had appeared live, in character, in the franchise's 30-year history. For the actress, it was a return to her thespian roots.

"There are two schools of thought. Both [film and the theater] are equally credible, but I think the camera teaches you to be who you are and an audience teaches you to be your character."



"I'm actually more comfortable in front of people, which is not so much my training as it is my instinct," says the 40-year-old industry veteran in a phone interview, during which she snacks on cantaloupe while preparing dinner for her sons, Ian and Alec. "For instance, I would be much better with you in person than I am on the phone. Something happens when I have an object between myself and the object of my 'desire.' I have always found the telephone to be very disconcerting. I've been accused of sounding very abrupt, sometimes even slightly caustic on the phone, but it's only because it introduces an element of discomfort for me."

Mulgrew's cinematic credits extend far beyond *Voyager*—her career includes a popular stint on *Ryan's Hope*, several supporting roles in feature films and the often-derided *Mrs. Columbo* series of the late '70s—but it's actually her stage performances that Mulgrew relishes most. Just out of her teens when she showed up in the Big Apple, she made her Broadway debut in *Black Comedy* and has returned to the stage when her TV and feature schedule allows. Still, even with all this experience, she says performing in *Voyager* is akin to arriving in a "brave new world."

"I'm learning a lot in front of the camera, I'll tell you that," she says. "There are two schools of thought. Both film and the theater are equally credible, but I think the camera teaches you to be who you are and an audience teaches you to be your character. When I was on stage, they weren't coming to see Katie. They came to see Heather or Marsha or whoever you're playing. The camera, however, wants to see you—and then it will be even more delighted if you can endow that image with some sort of characterization or nuance. So [the performance] is really a private experience; it's a secret world. That's why it's always so quiet on a soundstage when they say 'roll.' It never gets that quiet in the theater because there's too much human interaction going on."

Mulgrew feels that she tends to be a larger-than-life performer, and she has thus found television to be a true exercise in discipline.

"That's also the reason I love it," she laughs, "because every day I go in thinking, 'Today's the day I'm going to nail this thing,' but it never happens."

She has nailed more than a few performances on *Voyager*, but the intimate process of television acting continues to keep her on her toes—and she doesn't mind falling back on her theater training now and again. "It goes without saying that there is no such thing as an average performance in *Star Trek*," she says. "It's a highly stylized form, much more so than any other kind of dramatic television you would watch. The stakes are higher. We're talking about the 24th century. We're talking about something that is, in fact, quite theatrical. We live in a world now where reality-based shows are all the rage. But *Star Trek* has never been reality-based. This is a flight into the future, a great extension of the imagination, an exercise in the imagination. Therefore, they wanted—and I think it's pretty clear they got it from Shatner, they certainly got it from Patrick Stewart and I believe they got it from me—someone who's theatrically trained, a little bit bigger than life, in order to respond to the need of the audience to be raised above the mundane. That's its success and also its rigor. Let me assure you that I've never worked this hard in my life. I have danced through other roles comparatively speaking. On *Mrs. Columbo* I was in every frame, my hours were more arduous, but this is far more exacting work. We're not allowed to make a mistake in the writing or in the style. If

there's any degree of what might be misconstrued or construed as contemporary laziness, we have to reshoot it. There's a different essence. You're trying to create a reality that lets the audience take the journey with you. If you fall out of that reality, the audience will fall out with us and we can't allow that. It's constant vigilance, actually."

Probably more so than any previous *Trek* incarnation, *Voyager* has taken hits, real body blows, from critics and fans alike. Mulgrew doesn't let such sniping get her down, however, and she is genuinely convinced—or truly one helluva actress—that the shaky first two seasons have laid the groundwork for what she feels is a superior third year for the show.

"Year number one," she offers, "we have to ask ourselves, are we still breathing? Year number two, not only are we still breathing, but it seems to me we're all on our feet, which is a good thing. Year number three, who are we? The answer to that comes with relaxation. We've got 10 or 11 episodes in the can, and there's a whole feeling of relaxation, which I could not have achieved without the second season. It was just imperative. You can't get from a to d without b and c. I think it had its ups and downs, but season two was quite necessary. That's why I have such a good feeling about the third season, and I'm not just saying that. I *do* have a very good feeling about it."

And why not? In the show's third year, the writers have offered more challenging storylines, and the show has featured the return of the ever-popular Q (John DeLancie) and even the cybernetic Borg, two important components of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*'s success. And in one episode, Janeway actually becomes a Rambolina when she takes on an alien menace.

"I think there are maybe 10 minutes of dialogue in the whole show," Mulgrew says. "It's the alien and me, and I *nail* him big time. No one has seen Janeway's physicality, her brute strength when it comes to survival, [but] they do in that episode."

Star Trek: First Contact star Patrick Stewart recently told *CINESCAPE* that the lines between him and Captain Jean-Luc Picard blurred long ago, and it has become difficult to discern where actor and character begin and end. Mulgrew can identify with the feeling, believing that, after three years, she and Janeway have become intertwined in many ways.

"It's very difficult to separate myself from her when I'm working and even when I'm not," she muses. "I'm having some odd leakage, and it's altered my life dramatically. I really have to be in charge of my life. I have to be more authoritative, I have to be more careful and I have to be more demanding, because I have so much less time than I used to. I don't remember the last time I sat in a chair and stared at a wall, for instance. I'm constantly thinking about the clock, and it's a real challenge. Sleep has become inordinately important and precious. I really think about it a lot.

"I think I'm dealing with things that my [captain predecessors] didn't deal with," adds Mulgrew. "I'm raising two sons here by myself, which I don't think those guys did. I'm trying to do it well, which is very hard. Additionally, my intimate relationships are terribly important to me; my friends, who are not large in number but are so dear to me, are my food, without which I don't function at a very deep level, and it's my depth that gives me Janeway. So it all works as one. But it can become slightly treacherous if I don't really watch my step.

Priorities have become a masterpiece of choreography."

When Mulgrew is asked whether such a personal price is worth it, she abandons her typical reserve and laughs, "Of course it is, stupid!"

"I've waited a long time to meet my match and I've found her in Kathryn Janeway, so I've got to grab it," she says. "The work makes me so happy that it's all manageable and I [am able to] do this juggling act. I've been in this business for almost 25 years and this is something that has made me intensely happy.

"When I did *Mrs. Columbo*, I was simply too young to understand what was going on," she adds. "I lacked the chops for it. But at 40, I've been there, I've had a lot of bad stuff happen and a lot of great stuff happen. I've given birth, I've watched people die. I've lost a lot and won a lot. At 40, you kind of know that it's all going to end some day, so you have to grab it. This is a great time to be alive, because there's so little to lose, and I'm in the middle of a great chapter." ◆

ATTACK FORMATION

Originally designed as stop-motion animation, the goofy aliens of MARS ATTACKS! became creatures of the computer

No major studio film of recent years, with the possible exception of *Ed Wood*, has had a more unlikely origin than *Mars Attacks!* Indeed, only Tim Burton, the Hollywood maverick who brought us the life and times of the cross-dressing Z-grade filmmaker Wood, could pick up an outrageous, nearly forgotten bubblegum card set from 1962 and sell Warner Bros. on expanding its violent depiction of extraterrestrial invasion into a multimillion-dollar feature film. The original 55 trading cards succeeded in offending parents (causing the set to be pulled from store shelves shortly after it was issued), but Warner Bros. is counting on Burton's cockeyed sense of humor to keep the film goofy rather than gruesome.

To meet that mandate and bring Burton's conception of the aliens as whimsical, skull-faced, big-brained Martians to the big screen, Industrial Light & Magic, Warner Digital and other FX houses used virtually every effects technique indigenous to this planet to create some decidedly out-of-this-world imagery.

by Ron Magid

SKETCH BY TIM BURTON

"Tim felt the aliens should have the attitude of nasty 5-year-olds, and having had a nasty 5-year-old, I felt that was a good direction to go in."

—mechanical effects supervisor Michael Lantieri

Burton initially envisioned the Martians as stop-motion puppets, like the whimsical creatures in *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, a 1993 film that he produced. When ILM veteran Mark Miller suggested creating the Martians in the computer, Burton asked to see a test.

Miller recruited CG supervisor Jim Mitchell, who had modeled, animated and supervised effects for *Jumanji*. He also pulled in ace animator Dave Andrews to animate the Martians. The resulting five-second test, featuring some CG Martians yanking a bumper off a car, was then presented to Burton. "Tim loved it," Miller recalls. "He loved it so much that he wanted to make the whole movie CG."

Although stop-motion was out, the beautiful puppets that had already been built served as guides for ILM's 3-D model-makers. Once the characters were digitally recreated on Silicon Graphics workstations, ILM began animation tests to determine how the Martians would move.

But it was all going too smoothly—something had to happen, and sure enough, something did. Warner Bros. decided that *Mars Attacks!*, originally slated for a summer '97 release, should be bumped up to Christmas '96. With both ILM and Warner Digital's effects artists already working at capacity, principal photography began on Warner Bros.' soundstages and various locations late last year. Mitchell and ILM's Ellen Poon took turns shooting background plates on the set for the CG Martians, while Warner Digital's visual effects supervisor Mike Fink (*Batman Returns, Baby's Day Out*) shot plates to which CG spacecraft and weaponry would later be added. Both visual effects teams often worked side by side with mechanical effects supervisor Michael Lantieri (*Jurassic Park, Casper*), who would supervise the integration of the as-yet-nonexistent Martians.

To help the cast and crew visualize the CG Martians, Burton commissioned Global Effects, the company that crafted *Outbreak*'s environmental suits and Gary Oldman's armor for *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, to build two Martian costumes. The costumes proved handy for rehearsing camera moves and interaction between cast members and Martians, as well as for some of Lantieri's practical effects. Designed to be replaced with CG creations at ILM after the physical shoot was completed, the costumes were eliminated in the computer, but the artists retained the natural shadows. Burton was going for camp, but he wanted it to be *realistic* camp.

For mechanical effects supervisor Lantieri, a veteran of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, *Mars Attacks!* presented one of those rare "chances to be part of the performance and the characters. At our first meeting, I told Tim, 'If there are 10 Martians, each of them would throw a brick through a window differently,' and he liked that. He felt they should have the attitude of nasty 5-year-olds, and having had a nasty 5-year-old, I felt that was a good direction to go in."

Lantieri and his nasty 5-year-olds didn't just break windows, they decimated Las Vegas' legendary Landmark Hotel, which in the movie serves as the headquarters of real-estate magnate Art Lantz, played by Jack Nicholson. "In December '95, at the start of preproduction, we went to the hotel, which [the property's owners] had already slated for demolition, and figured out how to cover it with cameras every which way," Lantieri says. "I met with the demolition company and worked with them. We wanted the building to collapse in a different way—normally, demolished buildings just compact and go straight down. We tried to make it do an interesting fall, which we pretty much achieved."

To handle the second half of the hotel sequence—the destruction of the interior—Lantieri worked with Warner Digital, which supplied the flying saucer and Death Ray lasers that supposedly brought the structure crashing down. Lantieri's crew constructed and rigged Lantz's glass-enclosed, life-sized penthouse boardroom set to create the effect of being in the Landmark Hotel as it toppled over. "All the

glass shatters, columns fall, the floor opens up, swallowing the boardroom table as the structure starts to collapse, and a 14-foot diameter model of the Earth breaks loose and rolls over Art Lantz, killing him." Lantieri pauses, then continues. "And we did that all in one shot."

And with all the actors present amidst the destruction. "The great thing about Tim, which made our job even tougher, is that he loves to tie the actors to the action." Lantieri says. "I said to Jack, 'As you're speaking, 800 panes of glass are going to shatter behind you, but don't let that bother you. Besides that, the two columns behind you are going to fall and criss-cross, just missing you, but don't worry about that. Also, the walls outside are going to rise, and the floor is going to open up behind you, and people are going to be falling in, but just keep pretending like you don't notice. And then, the Earth's gonna break loose and roll toward you, but you keep talking and we'll stop it before it hits you!'

"We had two layers of wall," he continues. "The first was made of tempered glass rigged with about 600 different pyrotechnic squibs to shatter on cue. Just outside the set, 400-lb. walls rose up on air elevator winches, tearing conduits and dry wall, so it looked like the center of the building was starting to fall. Since we couldn't lower the set, we just raised the outside walls so it looked like the building was crumbling below."

The FXpert couldn't do a test since it would have meant wrecking the set—so it was all or nothing. "It took an entire day to shoot," Lantieri says. "When we finally let it all go, we had six cameras running. It was huge."

The saucers causing all the destruction were created primarily via computer graphics by Mike Fink of Warner Digital, who also used saucer models for shots of the ships crashing into water, cities and each other. The retro spacecraft are a spectacular homage to 1950s science-fiction films like *Earth vs. The Flying Saucers*. "They are wonderfully evocative," says Fink. "The good and bad thing about them is they are absolutely flying saucers: one saucer inverted over another with a teacup on top. They're really beautiful and truly elegant."

Building the saucers in the computer wasn't difficult, but there were other problems. Fink, digital supervisor Guy Williams and several animators attempted to create scale by manipulating the speed of the saucers' movements—but while moderating the speed successfully suggested the proper size, it also created a set of contradictions. "For scale, we wanted them to move slowly, but at the same time, these are warships and had to move quickly," Fink says. "Our assumption was there were two pilots in the saucer, each compensating for what the other was doing, so there would be subtle shifts from left to right, but Tim said, 'Too wacky.' Then we pictured them flying a bit like helicopters because they can shoot straight up and levitate, then fly forward. Ultimately, we settled on a more subtle, deliberate combination of the two."

The movie's opening sequence, which depicts the saucers leaving Mars and flying to Earth, measured some 5,000 frames long and was created almost entirely with computer graphics. While the first shot showing a lone reconnaissance ship leaving Earth was handled by ILM, the tour de force sequence's remaining 12 shots were all done by Warner Digital.

Beginning with the lone saucer

THEY CAME FROM OUTER SPACE: The Martians created by ILM outrage the president and his wife (below left) and destroy the empire of Art Lantz (right)

behind a barn on Earth. Burton's camera follows it as it leaves our planet and flies to Mars. "There's one shot of it travelling from Earth, past the moon, to Mars," Fink laughs. "It's like they're next-door neighbors—the saucer's there in about 20 seconds! The planets were very stylized 3-D CG models. Earth started out looking like the Universal logo, but little by little, it crept closer to [looking like the] NASA photos, but it's still quite stylized. Mars is very red, and looks like an orange left a little too long in the refrigerator."

On Mars, irises open over the craters dotting the craggy surface, emitting hundreds of thousands of saucers that assume battle formations and head for Earth. Fink and company built the spiky Martian landscape as a 40-foot by 50-foot forced-perspective tabletop miniature.

The next eight or nine cuts, ranging from 200 to 500 frames each, show the saucers flying toward Earth, climaxing in a huge combination pan/crane/dolly shot in outer space as they reach their destination. "Lighting the shot was rough," Fink laments. "When we shot the [background] plates on location in the desert, it was alternately sunny and raining, so the color of the earth changes, and since the saucers reflect the earth, we had to create many different environment masks—one for practically every shot—to reflect into the saucers."

The goofy Martians weren't the only characters that had to be created in the computer, nor the most difficult. Warner Digital and ILM shared the task of creating the spectacular Martian Robot sequence that some FX pros consider the highlight of the film. The exterior of the Robot, which Martians control from the inside, was modeled at Warner Digital, which animated the Robot's rampage through a trailer park. But the first shot of a Martian inside the Robot's glass-enclosed head was animated and modeled by ILM.

As animated by Warner Digital, the rampaging Robot behaves like a juvenile delinquent, crushing Airstream trailers in its hands like soda cans. "Those trailers were completely modeled in computer graphics," Fink says. "They had to match the real ones on set, which was quite a challenge. We documented the trailers extensively, and used those photographs as reference for painting our CG trailers. When the Robot smashes the trailers, the aluminum skin crinkles, the windows blow out and the curtains go crazy. It was a lot of work, and there was no way to do it with miniatures. It took huge amounts of time. But you'll never think in a million years that they aren't real Airstream trailers."

The Robot then charges after the film's live-action hero, digging up huge pieces of asphalt from the road and leaving gigantic gouges in its wake. "It's supposed to be 60 feet tall, and we estimated it weighs between 100 and 150 tons," Fink says. "Its footsteps were pretty heavy, so we added camera shake and CG dust rising up to all the shots. We were under quite a few constraints—Tim wanted it to move quickly, but it's hard to move something with that mass fast and still give it scale, but we managed it. It's really quite beautiful."

Meanwhile back at ILM, visual effects supervisor Jim Mitchell and his team were struggling to bring the alien stars of *Mars Attacks!* to life in some 250 shots. "These characters are an integral part of the story," Mitchell insists. "I don't see it so much as an effects film as an animated character film. Tim's idea was they were very reptilian. I saw them as a bunch of army ants trying to take over the world. Tim had us make them very deadpan, and that's where the humor came from: they're oblivious to

everyone except themselves."

From the start, Burton made it clear that there are two types of Martians: those who command and those who serve. The Martians are red in color, with big exposed brains towering over creepy/funny skull-faces with rolling eyes. The grunts, or soldiers, appear nude aboard their spaceship, but they wear green corrugated suits with glass helmets on Earth; they also breathe nitrogen from tanks on their backs and make quick, lizardlike movements. The Martian Leader and Martian Ambassador look identical to the grunts but wear robes and capes to indicate rank—and they glide rather than walk. "The grunts turn really quickly and they stay very still until they have a burst of motion when they kill people," says associate visual effects supervisor Ellen Poon gleefully. "The Leader and the Ambassador are regal characters—not like the worker bees that run around—so they glide. When they talk in their language, it sounds like 'Ga-Ga-Ga-Ga!' and they're all the same height—5'2"—which is my height! They're my kind of people."

If you were tossed around in a cramped metallic model, you'd probably be going "Ga-Ga-Ga-Ga," too. Though the Martians were created in CG, they primarily got around in a 1/4-scale model of the spaceship interior, a set created for the original stop-motion puppets. ILM opted to finish the model and shoot it as background plates for their CG characters. The script called for two distinctive, contiguous areas, the Control Room and an ominous Operating Room, but the miniature, with its circular design, grated floor and domed roof, only measured nine feet across and eight feet tall. Consequently, ILM planned to dress the Control Room first, shoot it, then completely redress the interior, using only the same exterior wall, as the Operating Room.

But making a miniature spaceship interior hold up on the silver screen for extensive sequences was a tall order. ILM's ace effects cinematographer Pat Sweeney (*The Indian in the Cupboard, The Nightmare Before Christmas*) shot the miniature using custom-designed, low-profile Vistavision cameras suspended from large crane arms that could sneak into those tough-to-get-at areas. Although the circular set was raised four feet off the floor on a wooden platform and divided into four pie-shaped sections that enabled Sweeney's crew to remove a quarter or half of the set to get the camera into position, the camera moves were tricky to plan since they inevitably followed the CG Martians, which obviously weren't on the set.

Before shooting the clean background plate into which ILM's animators would eventually add Martians, Sweeney climbed under the set, stuck his arm up through the floor and moved the stop-motion puppets as the motion-control rig propelled the camera. These video animatics gave both the cinematographer and the animators a sense of the pace of each shot, and showed how big the Martians should be, where they were going, how fast they were moving and what lighting they were walking through in the empty plate Sweeney would later shoot.

Sweeney shot his miniature set like he would a real full-scale location: in a single pass. While most motion-control shots these days are done using multiple passes for lighting, matting, etc., Sweeney felt shooting in one pass would make it look more realistic. Was he successful? Sweeney grins. "There's probably a lot of [alien abuductees] who will see our spaceship scenes and say, 'That's how it was!'"

Beyond compositing the CG Martians into this miniature interior, ILM proposed to go even further, placing actors Pierce Brosnan and Sarah Jessica Parker into the scene. After encountering the Martians, Brosnan, a presidential aide, is dismembered and his body parts are confined to various jars, but his head enjoys a flirtatious encounter in the aliens' Operating Room with Parker, a reporter, whose own head now graces her pet chihuahua's body.

In an audacious move, Burton asked ILM to shoot both actors together against bluescreen as they exchanged dialogue, even though Brosnan's head was supposed to be hanging from the ceiling and Parker's was supposedly attached to the dog. While ILM's animators merely had to extract Brosnan's head from the bluescreen shots and track a CG stump to his neck, tracking Parker's head to a CG dog's body was difficult. In the sequence, the necks are crudely stitched together, so to make the blend, ILM's animators contoured Parker's neck down to chihuahua-size, as if the skin were being pulled taut, then expanded the dog's skin outward in a funnel shape. "Sarah's head was a two-dimensional bluescreen element that we had to blend onto a computer graphics neck-patch, then texture map and paint to match to our 3-D chihuahua's neck," explains animation supervisor Dave Andrews. "We then actually tailor-made our chihuahua animation so that all the things her head does motivates its body movements and visa-versa. It doesn't look like one of those cheapo '50s effects; it's pretty '90s and state-of-the-art."

The digital effects pros at Warner Digital and ILM have created spaceships, robots, death rays and swarms of Martians for what promises to be one of the weirdest films ever released by a major studio. And according to ILM's Ellen Poon, that's a good thing: "I think filmmakers should be more adventurous with effects and the characters in their movies. Don't just do creatures or make them all look human, but create characters who are unique in their own way and have a little style. It's about time." ◆

SAUCERS OVER HOLLYWOOD: FXperts shoot plates for Burton's space romp (below); Brosnan (right)

HiP to be ScaRed

Wes Craven thinks his bloody murder mystery is a *Scream*

by chandra palermo

Don't hide in the closet. Don't open that door. And whatever you do, don't forget what you learned from watching horror movies.

That's advice the lead characters in *Scream* ought to heed, according to Wes Craven, the director of the upcoming Miramax horror-comedy.

"*Scream* is a murder mystery set among teenagers who are fans of scary movies, and many of the clues and the dialogue are references to classics," says Craven (*Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Vampire in Brooklyn*). "It's a movie about kids who like these kinds of movies and are dying at the hands of somebody who is using the movies' devices."

In the film, a teen, played by Neve Campbell, is having trouble putting the brutal death of her mother behind her. She was instrumental in the conviction of the killer, but she's been attacked in the press by a reporter (Courtney Cox) who claims that the man who was jailed is not the real culprit. When she and her friends—played by Drew Barrymore and Skeet Ulrich, among others—are terrorized by an unknown assailant, she realizes the journalist might be right.

And why does this particular murderer kill people? Because they can't answer his trivia questions about horror movies.

"I did it as an homage to all those people out there who, like me, really love horror movies," explains screenwriter Kevin Williamson. "But I also tried to make it smart because, for some reason, horror movies aren't really working anymore. I wanted [the film to be] a murder mystery. That's something that's missing from horror films. We always know the killer early on, and he's just stalking the victims one by one. In *Scream*, [as possible suspects] you've got the father, the principal, the deputy, the boyfriend and the video store clerk who's seen too many horror movies."

WRONG NUMBER: Drew Barrymore gets a nasty call

"In a sense, I suppose you could call it a horror film, but there's so much of a murder mystery involved," adds Craven. "The movie starts out going in directions that you think you can predict, and then it takes a left turn and surprises you."

Scream seems a strange choice for Craven, considering his recent talk of moving away from horror films. The director, however, sees his latest movie, which opens Dec. 20, as his swan song to the genre.

"Somehow, in sort of backing away from the genre, I hurt myself by doing some less than fully courageous horror films, and I just decided I was going to do one last really in-your-face horror film," offers Craven.

Despite his mainstream status, Craven's films still have the power to shock. Before filming was set to begin in a San Francisco-area high school, the Santa Rosa School Board banned the project because of the script's "violent content."

"It is quite explicit in several sections of the film, but it's not like, 'Now we're gonna rip out the heart and throw it across the screen,'" says Craven. "Certainly from the side of free speech, they had no right to do what they did."

Spooked by the potential free-speech controversy, the school board attacked *Scream* from a different angle.

"They said that we were going to be disrupting [classes]. Of course, a week later, Ronnie Howard came up and requested the school for a film that he's executive producing. They sailed in and out, shot for 11 days and nobody complained at all," he notes.

"You can't blame the movies—that's my ultimate stand on it, and that's the ultimate statement in *Scream*," says Williamson. "What creates violence in the real world is lack of opportunity, and by not letting us film there, they're saying no to $3 million, which would have created opportunity." ◆

ABSOLUTE POWER

THE PLAYERS: Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman

THE PLOT: The *Unforgiven* team spins a tale of murder in the White House.

THE DIRECTOR: Clint Eastwood

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia/TriStar

RELEASE DATE: February 7

A.F.O.

THE PLAYERS: Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman

THE PLOT: The President (Ford) and his family are taken hostage aboard their personal jet by a freaky Russian terrorist (Oldman). The film's original moniker, *Air Force One*, was changed after a dispute with a production company that owns that title.

THE DIRECTOR: Wolfgang Petersen

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia/TriStar

RELEASE DATE: August 1

ALIEN RESURRECTION

THE PLAYERS: Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder

THE PLOT: French director Jeunet (*City of Lost Children*) is at the helm of the fourth *Alien* installment, which began production in September. In the course of the film, a cloned Ripley is the target of an assassin (Ryder), but eventually the two action heroines become allies.

THE DIRECTOR: Jean-Pierre Jeunet

DISTRIBUTOR: 20th Century Fox

RELEASE DATE: July 25

APT PUPIL

THE PLAYERS: Brad Renfro, Ian McKellan

THE PLOT: A young boy makes the acquaintance of a Nazi war criminal hiding out in a suburban community.

THE DIRECTOR: Bryan Singer

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia/TriStar

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

BATMAN AND ROBIN

THE PLAYERS: George Clooney, Chris O'Donnell, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Uma Thurman, Alicia Silverstone

THE PLOT: The daring duo (Clooney and O'Donnell) fight Gotham super-villains Poison Ivy (Thurman) and Mr. Freeze (Schwarzenegger).

THE DIRECTOR: Joel Schumacher

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.

RELEASE DATE: June 20

COLONY

THE PLAYERS: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Mickey Rourke, Dennis Rodman

THE PLOT: Rodman's character helps former CIA agent (Van Damme) escape from a prison for ex-spies so the agent can save his pregnant wife from bad guys.

THE DIRECTOR: Tsui Hark

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia/TriStar

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

HOT STUFF: Hamilton in *Peak*

CON AIR

THE PLAYERS: Nicolas Cage, John Cusack, Steve Buscemi

THE PLOT: An eclectic cast essays this action flick about the air transport of prisoners.

THE DIRECTOR: Chuck Martinez

DISTRIBUTOR: Buena Vista

RELEASE DATE: March 14

CONTACT

THE PLAYERS: Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, Angela Bassett

THE PLOT: After endless development, this sci-fi adventure is finally moving ahead. Foster stars as an astronomer who makes a momentous journey to the stars.

THE DIRECTOR: Robert Zemeckis

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.

RELEASE DATE: July 18

COPLAND

THE PLAYERS: Sylvester Stallone, Robert De Niro, Ray Liotta

THE PLOT: Sly wants to be taken seriously as an actor, and his top-notch castmates in this small-town cop drama ought to put him through his thespian paces. The $20 million man has reportedly even packed on some pounds in order to get into character.

THE DIRECTOR: James Mangold

DISTRIBUTOR: Miramax

RELEASE DATE: August 1

Master of Disguise

AS A CHILD growing up just outside Seattle, Todd Masters, the prosthetic and make-up artist who brought the *Dark Skies* aliens and the elaborate *Star Trek: First Contact* Borg Queen to life, wasn't content to just piece together model airplanes. A filmmaker at an early age, Masters realized he needed actors that were more reliable than neighborhood children, so he began making synthetic characters out of clay and latex in his parents' kitchen. Obsessed with his new craft, he eventually offered his services to a Seattle animation company, which had no idea that their talented new employee was only 12 years old.

"I started working on a birth-control film," laughs Masters, who was a department head at the company by the age of 13. "Before I even knew what I was doing, [I was] painting IUDs and sperm and all these things with funny characters. It was very unusual."

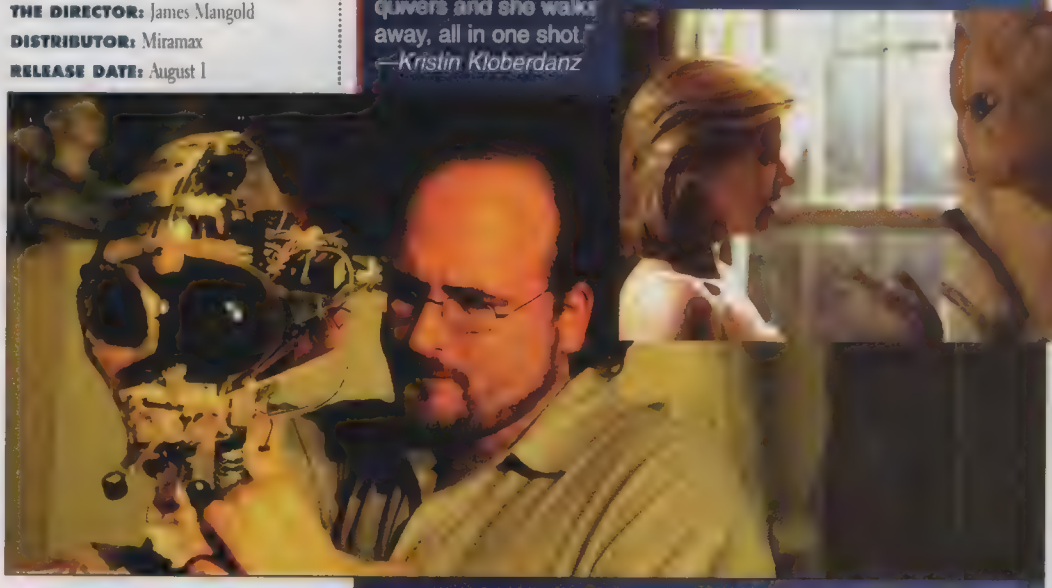
The unusual soon became a way of life for Masters. After honing his special-effects skills throughout high school for various companies (he even worked on some bluescreen shots for *The Empire Strikes Back*), Masters headed to L.A. at the age of 18 and landed a job at a premier effects company, Boss Films, his first day in town. He created effects for movies like *Predator* and *Poltergeist II*, and then went on to found his own company. Since then, he's worked on effects for a variety of projects including *Nightmare on Elm Street* and both *Addams Family* films; most recently, Masters did effects work for *Star Trek: First Contact*, and he's currently the visual effects supervisor for NBC's *Dark Skies*.

"A lot of things have changed since the days of just rubber heads," Masters says. "We still do a lot of that, but since 1991-92, there's been a lot of competition [from] digital effects. We've learned to adapt to that by interfacing [with] them and working in conjunction with computer graphics."

As an example of his integrated approach, Masters cites the innovative Borg Queen he created with ILM visual effects artists, who wanted to do the shot with an entirely digital model. Working together, Masters and ILM created a Borg Queen that's part prosthetics, part blue-screen magic.

When the Queen makes her appearance, according to Masters, "she comes down as a kind of partial torso, she's really just a head, a neck and shoulders with this big chrome writhing spine. [This creation] hangs off cables from the ceiling, descends down and plugs into her body, and her body just sort of settles, quivers and she walks away, all in one shot."

—*Kristin Kloberdanz*



MOVIES

AIRBORNE: Steve Buscemi plays a prison-bound traveler in *Con Air*

THE DAY OF THE JACKAL

THE PLAYERS: Bruce Willis, Richard Gere, Diane Venora

THE PLOT: In this remake of the French thriller, a would-be political assassin (Gere) is hunted throughout the States by a relentless detective (Willis).

THE DIRECTOR: Michael Caton-Jones

DISTRIBUTOR: Universal

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

DANTE'S PEAK

THE PLAYERS: Pierce Brosnan, Linda Hamilton

THE PLOT: Brosnan plays a crusading volcanologist of one of Hollywood's two competing mega-budget lava flicks.

THE DIRECTOR: Roger Donaldson

DISTRIBUTOR: Universal

RELEASE DATE: March 7

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

THE PLAYERS: Al Pacino, Keanu Reeves, Charlize Theron

THE PLOT: Reeves is an upstart young lawyer whose new boss (Pacino) just happens to be Lucifer.

THE DIRECTOR: Taylor Hackford

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.

RELEASE DATE: August

DEVIL'S OWN

THE PLAYERS: Harrison Ford, Brad Pitt

THE PLOT: Problems have dogged this production about a cop who unknowingly takes in an IRA terrorist, and the ensuing delays pushed the release from last fall to this spring.

THE DIRECTOR: Alan J. Pakula

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia/TriStar

RELEASE DATE: March 26

DONNIE BRASCO

THE PLAYERS: Johnny Depp, Al Pacino

THE PLOT: Depp, hospitalized during filming for "exhaustion," stars with Pacino and *Mulholland Falls*' Michael Madsen as a government agent working undercover inside the New York Mafia.

THE DIRECTOR: Mike Newell

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia/TriStar

RELEASE DATE: February 28

FIFTH ELEMENT

THE PLAYERS: Bruce Willis, Gary Oldman

THE PLOT: A top-secret sci-fi flick from the director of *The Professional*.

THE DIRECTOR: Luc Besson

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia/TriStar

RELEASE DATE: May 9

THE FLOOD

THE PLAYERS: Christian Slater, Morgan Freeman, Minnie Driver

THE PLOT: Freakish natural disaster strikes again and you'll never guess what form it takes.

THE DIRECTOR: Mikael Salomon

DISTRIBUTOR: Paramount

RELEASE DATE: May 16

BACK IN BLACK: Will Smith returns to battle more aliens

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THE GAME

THE PLAYERS: Michael Douglas, Sean Penn, Deborah Unger

THE PLOT: A wealthy San Franciscan gets ensnared in a dangerous hobby. The lead was originally going to be played by Jodie Foster, but after a legal dispute, the role went to Michael Douglas.

THE DIRECTOR: David Fincher

DISTRIBUTOR: T.B.D.

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

GODZILLA

THE PLAYERS: King of the lizards

THE PLOT: After grounding this production due to exorbitant cost projections, TriStar revived the latent lizard with a revised budget and *ID4*'s Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin in charge. The studio is hoping that the team can create a relatively low-budget crowd pleaser along the lines of their last film, which will likely gross more than $500 million around the world.

THE DIRECTOR: Roland Emmerich

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia/TriStar

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

JAMES BOND 18

THE PLAYERS: Pierce Brosnan

THE PLOT: Much to the horror of M.G.M., the studio that has provided us with the other 17 Bond films, another producer is trying to put together a competing Bond film, possibly starring Timothy Dalton.

THE DIRECTOR: T.B.D.

DISTRIBUTOR: M.G.M.

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

THE LOST WORLD

THE PLAYERS: Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore

THE PLOT: After spending his days starting up DreamWorks and helping out with a few CD-ROM projects, Spielberg will finally get back behind the cameras again for this monster-budget follow-up to Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park*.

THE DIRECTOR: Steven Spielberg

DISTRIBUTOR: Universal

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

MEN IN BLACK

THE PLAYERS: Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith, Vincent D'Onofrio, Linda Fiorentino

THE PLOT: In this cinematic version of the Malibu comic, a hip pair of detectives investigate incidents of alien visitations—not a new concept to *ID4* star Smith.

THE DIRECTOR: Barry Sonnenfeld

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia/TriStar

RELEASE DATE: June 6

NAVY CROSS

THE PLAYERS: Demi Moore, Viggo Mortensen, Anne Bancroft

THE PLOT: The newly shorn Demi, who used her Hollywood pull to get the White House and the Pentagon to help out the production, will play the fictional role of the first woman ever admitted to the exclusive ranks of the military's special forces.

THE DIRECTOR: Ridley Scott

DISTRIBUTOR: Buena Vista

RELEASE DATE: April 25

WEIRD SCIENTIST: Goldblum

PLANET OF THE APES

THE PLAYERS: Arnold Schwarzenegger

THE PLOT: The Austrian suits up for the Oliver Stone-produced remake of the simian classic. It sure seems as though this movie has been in preproduction since the dawn of time—maybe it'll get made one day.

THE DIRECTOR: Chris Columbus

DISTRIBUTOR: 20th Century Fox

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

THE REPLACEMENT KILLERS

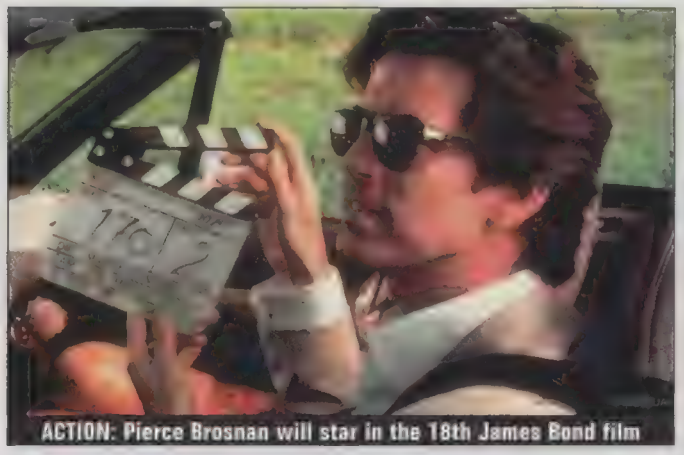
THE PLAYERS: Mira Sorvino, Chow Yun-Fat

THE PLOT: An assassin (Yun-Fat) has second thoughts about his occupation and gets some help from a female forger (Sorvino) to prevent an ordered hit. This is the third film Sorvino has worked on this year, following her Oscar-winning role in *Mighty Aphrodite*. *The Replacement Killers* is also Hong Kong actor Yun-Fat's first American movie.

THE DIRECTOR: Antoine Fuqua

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia/TriStar

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.



ACTION: Pierce Brosnan will star in the 18th James Bond film

THE SAINT

THE PLAYERS: Val Kilmer, Elisabeth Shue

THE PLOT: A big-screen remake of the classic television series about a crook who steals from the rich and gives to the poor.

THE DIRECTOR: Phillip Noyce

DISTRIBUTOR: Paramount

RELEASE DATE: March 28

SMILLA'S SENSE OF SNOW

THE PLAYERS: Julia Ormond, Gabriel Byrne, Vanessa Redgrave

THE PLOT: Ormond (*Sabrina, First Knight*) stars as a geological scientist who uncovers a massive conspiracy while investigating the suspicious death of a friend's child.

THE DIRECTOR: Bille August

DISTRIBUTOR: 20th Century Fox

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

SPEED 2

THE PLAYERS: Jason Patric, Sandra Bullock

THE PLOT: The sequel has nothing to do with a bus or Keanu Reeves, who decided to take a break from the action genre. This time, Jason Patric (*Sleepers*) is the star and the events take place on a cruise ship

THE DIRECTOR: Jan De Bont

DISTRIBUTOR: 20th Century Fox

RELEASE DATE: July 2

SPHERE

THE PLAYERS: Dustin Hoffman

THE PLOT: Production has recently been delayed on this sci-fi epic–perhaps Levinson is taking a break after his success with *Sleepers*.

THE DIRECTOR: Barry Levinson

DISTRIBUTOR: Warner Bros.

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

STARSHIP TROOPERS

THE PLAYERS: Neil Patrick Harris, Dina Meyer, Jake Busey

THE PLOT: In this big-budget space flick, Earth soldiers battle tenacious insects.

THE DIRECTOR: Paul Verhoeven

DISTRIBUTOR: Columbia/TriStar

RELEASE DATE: July 2

STAR WARS (Episode 1)

THE PLAYERS: T.B.D.

THE PLOT: George Lucas is currently plotting the new trilogy; in the meantime, a remastered version of *Star Wars* will arrive in theaters on Jan. 31. After years of speculation, Lucas recently announced that he will helm the newest SW film.

THE DIRECTOR: George Lucas

DISTRIBUTOR: T.B.D.

RELEASE DATE: 1999

TITANIC

THE PLAYERS: Kate Winslet, Leonardo DiCaprio, Bill Paxton, Kathy Bates, Gloria Stuart, Suzy Amis

THE PLOT: Production workers had to deal with a disaster of their own when someone on the set spiked the cast and crew's food with a hallucination-inducing drug. With that small crisis behind them, though, this mega-budget tale of the Titanic's demise is steaming full speed ahead in Mexico

THE DIRECTOR: James Cameron

DISTRIBUTOR: 20th Century Fox

RELEASE DATE: July 4

U-TURN

THE PLAYERS: Sean Penn, Nick Nolte, Jennifer Lopez

THE PLOT: After *Independence Day*'s Bill Paxton dropped out of the starring role for this project, Sean Penn—Oliver Stone's original choice for the lead—took over. He plays a wanderer who, after his car breaks down in a small, remote town, becomes involved in the lives of a beautiful woman (Lopez) and her husband (Nolte). The film was originally titled *Stray Dogs*.

THE DIRECTOR: Oliver Stone

DISTRIBUTOR: T.B.D.

RELEASE DATE: T.B.D.

VOLCANO

THE PLAYERS: Tommy Lee Jones, Anne Heche, Gaby Hoffman

THE PLOT: Beverly Hills gets covered in lava in this flick about an erupting volcano Fox hopes to get its volcano movie to theaters before Universal's *Dante's Peak*

THE DIRECTOR: Mick Jackson

DISTRIBUTOR: 20th Century Fox

RELEASE DATE: February 28

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Day of Reckoning

Will Smith throws a bodacious barbecue for a horde of visiting aliens

by mo ryan

There's no doubt about it, *Independence Day* (Fox) is full of hokey, patriotic Kodak moments—the sort of mawkish chest-thumping that I thought died out when Ronald Reagan left office. Near the end of the movie, when Bill Pullman, as the stalwart, strong-jawed President Whitmore, strode onto the back of a flatbed truck and made a corny speech intended to rally a motley collection of citizens against the invading alien hordes, I winced. What's he going to do next, I wondered, tell me to go to bed early and to always eat my vegetables? But truth be told, *Independence Day*'s squareness is part of its considerable charm. These days, when cinematic style is defined by the MTV anomie of *Seven* and when the superficial, disaffected *Trainspotting* is considered the height of cleverness, *ID4* dares to be different. It not only gleefully appropriates the whiz-bang imagery from the best of sci-fi past, it also adopts the holy-cow attitude of our most treasured space operas. Sure, we can make fun of *Star Wars*' earnestness and *Forbidden Planet*'s dorky costumes, but deep down we know those movies actually believed in something. *ID4*, despite its hip cast and knowing witticisms, wants us to believe that in the face of worldwide cataclysm, humans would put aside their differences and defeat an invading enemy with a combination of team spirit and old-fashioned derring-do. If you wonder whether that multi-cultural dream has any appeal these days, *ID4*'s $500 million box-office take should be a slight indication that optimism may be coming back into vogue.

Of course, a homespun appeal to humanity's highest interest isn't *ID4*'s chief appeal. Like the best sci-fi flicks, the film isn't just about eye-popping visual impact—it also creates characters that are easy to like, no matter how clichéd they may be. The stripper with the heart of gold, the cocky fighter pilot and the wise-cracking computer geek are all shopworn characters, but far from shying away from such trusty archetypes, filmmakers Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich positively revel in them. The

hooker isn't just any hooker—*ID4*'s heroine bravely rescues the First Lady from the rubble of Los Angeles. The computer nerd isn't just your garden-variety techie—Jeff Goldblum can actually hack into the computer system of the aliens (who, like the rest of the inhabitants of the universe, were probably forced to adopt Windows95 as their operating system).

But Devlin and Emmerich, who respectively produced and directed the film, reveal the canniness beneath the corn with their casting choices. Most filmmakers would have opted to put a hipster like Johnny Depp or Leonardo DiCaprio in the cockpit of their F-16: Roland and Emmerich picked the goofy, self-deprecating Will Smith, who imbues the role of Stephen Hiller with just the right amount of drollery and Jimmy Stewart-style sincerity. As the computer nerd, Jeff Goldblum exudes his usual left-of-center intelligence and loopy wit, which is no less impressive for seeming effortless. As President Whitmore, Bill Pullman is hampered by White House sets that look eerily reminiscent of Dan Ackroyd-era *Saturday Night Live*, but with his light touch, Pullman's probably the only working actor who could pull off serious dramatic speeches in a film that at times veers close to sci-fi parody.

Many critics took Devlin and Emmerich to task for ripping off everything from the old Buck Rogers serials to *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers*, but their film features far more appreciative nods than Tarantino-style wholesale appropriations. And truth be told, the images of the giant Frisbee-shaped ships hovering over the Earth's major cities—a conceit that belongs to this film alone—are just plain cool, and the movie gets even cooler once the aliens' destructive orgy begins. Every kid who ever created a sand castle knows the real reason to build it is to be able to gleefully knock it down, and that sense of unironic, energetic pleasure informs every frame of *ID4*'s scenes of mayhem. A few of the ship-to-ship space battles look a bit fake, but anyone who can resist getting caught up in the movie's careening onrush of breathless plot developments and scrappy acts of courage must be from outer space.

You can poke holes in the plot all day long, you can critique the hokeyness of the script, the characters and the sets until the cows come home, but few movies this year provided as many visceral thrills as *Independence Day*. Laughing at Will Smith punching an alien in the head may not be one of life's more cerebral pleasures, but sometimes movies are just supposed to be...*fun*. ★★★☆☆

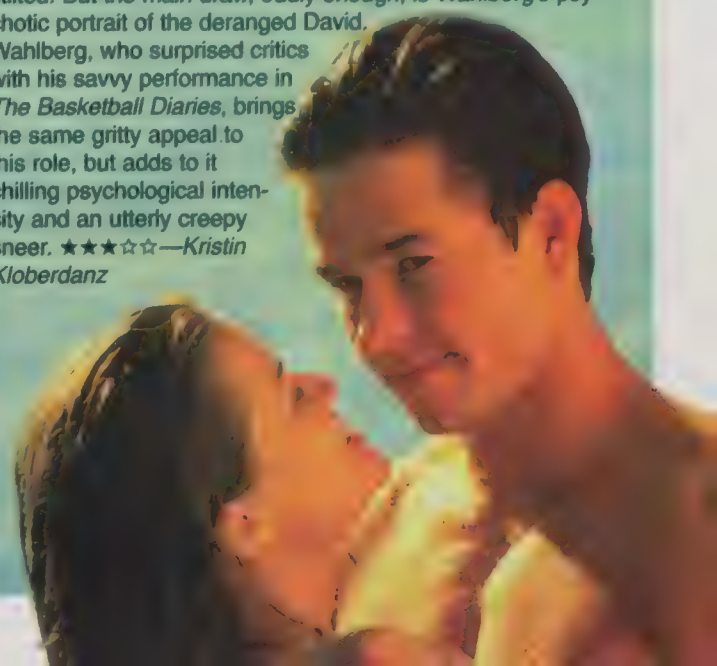
panic ATTACKS

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, between bouts of trouser-dropping over the past few years, former teen heart throb Marky Mark Wahlberg actually managed to pick up a few acting skills, all of which are on display in the chilling *Fear* (MCA/Universal).

Wahlberg is suitably intense as David, a character who systematically destroys his naive girlfriend's sheltered world by introducing her to a gut-wrenching nightmare of violence. As a recent transplant to Seattle, young Nicole (Reese Witherspoon) is so desperate for friends that she starts hanging out with a scantily clad temptress named Margo (Alyssa Milano). One wonders why the preppy Nicole, who is also seen happily hanging out with a geeky school friend, is drawn to the sleazy Margo and her wild party scene; nevertheless, at one late-night rave, Nicole meets the charismatic David, and is quickly smitten by the older boy.

Things take a turn for the worse when Nicole's father Steve (William Petersen) takes a dislike to David, and Nicole's own trust in her boyfriend is destroyed when she catches him forcing a drugged-out Margo to have sex with him. Eventually, Steve decides to take the law into his own hands, and soon David and the young girl's family are at war. Thanks to excellent direction by James Foley, the film's already brisk pace speeds up to a ferocious climax when, in scene reminiscent of *A Clockwork Orange*, David and his gang of fierce friends surround Nicole and her terrified family, who have barricaded themselves in their secluded mansion.

Despite the taut direction and the uniformly excellent performances, *Fear* isn't without flaws. One wonders how David manages to get away with so much violence—including a vicious pummeling of Nicole's geek pal—without suffering serious consequences earlier on. In addition, the film's dialogue, especially between Nicole and her father, tends to be stilted. But the main draw, oddly enough, is Wahlberg's psychotic portrait of the deranged David. Wahlberg, who surprised critics with his savvy performance in *The Basketball Diaries*, brings the same gritty appeal to this role, but adds to it chilling psychological intensity and an utterly creepy sneer. ★★★☆☆—*Kristin Kloberdanz*



THAT THING TO DO

Christopher Walken has a way of making his eerie presence felt in a film even when he's not the leading character, and his performance in *Things To Do In Denver When You're Dead* (Miramax) is no exception. As a quadriplegic criminal called The Man With a Plan, he ruthlessly governs a pathetic clutch of mobsters, a sobering situation that seems to cast a chilly shadow over the entire film.

Andy Garcia plays Jimmy, a.k.a. The Saint, a former associate of The Man with the Plan who's tried to put his gangster past behind him. One day, however, he gets a visit from a couple of his old boss' lackeys, and eventually the Man convinces a reluctant Jimmy to take charge of a relatively simple job. Jimmy rounds up his old crew, (which includes a cheerful Christopher Lloyd as a washed-up porn aficionado), all of whom are eager to make some quick cash.

As so often happens in Tarantino-land, things don't go according to plan, and Jimmy and friends find themselves awaiting a visit from the notorious Mister Shhh (Steve Buscemi), who looks about as helpless as Olive Oil but is nonetheless supposed to be a systematic killing machine.

Having recently made the acquaintance of a beautiful young woman, Dagney (Gabrielle Anwar), Jimmy lingers on in Denver for couple of days, spending bittersweet moments with his wan new girlfriend, who never really says much. He also manages to cram in some quality time with edgy prostitute Lucindo (Fairuza Balk), who, had she been given more screen time, would have done a lot to liven up this movie with her quick wit and jerky movements.

This movie's appeal depends more on the appeal of its quirky characters than on the complexities of its plot, but not all of the characters shine. Despite the excellent supporting performances of Walken, Balk and Lloyd, Andy Garcia never looks terribly comfortable in this film. Indeed, his relationship with Anwar is particularly lackluster—the pick-up line that brings them together, "Girls who glide need guys who make them thump," is only one indication of the script's misfires. But with its cast of unpredictable characters inhabiting an arid landscape tinged with melancholy, *Things To Do In Denver* is a still an interesting twist on the old gangster story.
★★★☆☆—*KK*

Ghost in the DARK MESS

GHOSTLY VISIONS HAVE never seemed sillier than in *The Frighteners* (MCA/Universal), a senseless Michael J. Fox vehicle that depends on corpse deterioration rather than wit for laughs.

In the town of Fairweather, an alarming number of healthy citizens have been found dead over the past few years from causes unknown. While local detectives and journalists try to figure out what's going on, psychic con man Frank Bannister (Fox) takes full advantage of this unique business opportunity. Frank, it seems, has befriended a few decrepit ghosts (Bannister has been able to communicate with the dead ever since he was in an auto accident that killed his wife), and these undead pals help him prey on gullible residents who think their homes are haunted.

Frank is sucked into Fairweather's mystery when he realizes that he alone can see the mark of death on the living. For some inexplicable reason, Death is framing Frank as the murderer, and he's soon on the hit list of a wacked-out FBI agent, Milton Dammers (Jeffrey Combs). By far the most entertaining of the characters in this film, Milton is a pasty, nervous wreck who vomits whenever a woman yells at him. The plot becomes increasingly convoluted when Frank and his romantic interest Lucy (Trini Alvarado) realize that a dead serial killer, Johnny Bartlett, is on the scene as well. It seems the ghostly killer and his girlfriend have decided to not let death get in the way of their love affair, which was built upon a lengthy murder spree. But like the ghosts whose attachment to Frank is never adequately explained, the appearance of Bartlett and his sweetie is another hitch in a script that doesn't quite flow.

The special effects are excellent in this film, but director Peter Jackson ruins several scenes with tasteless sight gags, as when a ghostly judge (John Astin) gleefully has sex with a female mummy. Necrophilia, even when committed by a rotting ghoul, still tends to leave a sour taste in the mouth.
★★☆☆☆—*KK*

BirdGAUGE

If you accept that *The Crow: City of Angels* is not really a movie, then it's quite possible to enjoy it. More a visually intensive tone poem than a film, *City of Angels* (Dimension) resembles a lavish picture book—which is, in fact, the medium from which the *Crow* films sprang.

More than a dozen years ago, an unknown artist named James O'Barr began a cathartic project about a bereft man who comes back from the dead to avenge the brutal murder of his true love. With its alternating images of hallucinatory violence and bittersweet, romantic despair, O'Barr's *Crow* comic books found an admiring audience in underground urban communities. The story was eventually picked up by Hollywood, and the first *Crow* film, which starred Brandon Lee, was released in 1994.

Most such stories have an unhappy ending, in which a frustrated artist curses the movie-world philistines that ruined his vision. But the first *Crow* film was mostly true to O'Barr's books, and visuals are truly what defined both that movie and its sequel. The plot of *The Crow*, such as it was, depicted O'Barr's vengeful tale of a young man—burning with anger and invincible in his imperviousness to pain—who comes back from the dead to kill those who murdered his girlfriend. With it's lushly desolate, post-apocalyptic sets. *The Crow* was more a compelling mélange of artfully created images than it was a truly sustained narrative.

The second *Crow* film is pretty much a repeat of the first, with a similar emphasis on visuals and atmospherics. The plot has undergone a few minor variations—instead of avenging the death of a lover, in this film the new Crow, Ashe, seeks revenge for the death of his young son. Director Tim Pope, a well-regarded music-video auteur, has imbued the City of Angels with a nearly elegant element of decay, and the best thing about Pope's film are the sets, in which sepia tones and yellow lights make Los Angeles look like something out of a Victorian William Gibson novel.

Vincent Perez is a suitable inheritor of the Crow's mantle, even if he doesn't quite match the intensity of the late Brandon Lee. Unfortunately, the lovely Mia Kirshner is limited to moping around her Gothic loft and staring at Ashe with her luminous blue eyes. The best thing about the film is sinewy rocker Iggy Pop as the villainous Curve—his rock body and sneering visage enliven the film in every scene he's in.

Despite its flaws, this beautifully shot film somehow has the power to draw the viewer in. Before *City of Angels* begins, you know the plot and you know how it's going to end, so the best thing to do is just sit back and allow the film's elegaic depictions of despair and longing wash over you.
★★★☆☆—*Frieda Noone*

QUEST FOR IRE

Halfway through *The Quest*, you get the feeling that first-time director Jean-Claude Van Damme was on a pilgrimage of his own regarding the film's plot. Is *The Quest* (Columbia/ TriStar) a coming-of-age film? An Indiana Jones-style adventure? A fight movie? Whatever Jean-Claude's ambitions, the script isn't well-written enough to be convincing in any genre.

The film would have us believe that the Muscles from Brussels is Chris DuBois, a good-hearted resident of 1920s New York who watches out for a bunch of orphans who live in his neighborhood. DuBois' good days end when, fleeing police, he winds up on a freighter headed for the Far East. Eventually—don't ask how—our hero winds up in a contest to determine who is the best fighter in the world.

That thin plot might have been adequate if the fight scenes had anything going for them, but each bout is little more than a ponderous match between buff posers. Fight fans will laugh out loud at the huge discrepancies in the action—for instance, DuBois easily dispatches a lightning-quick martial artist, but gets pummeled by a tank-like Mongolian who's about as fast as an ice-cream truck.

As a first-time director, Van Damme shows an excellent eye for scenery, though I suspect his cinematographer had a lot to do with that. Other than telling his camera crew to take lots of pretty pictures, Van Damme seemingly asked his actors to share several silent, meaningful glances with each other every few scenes—but come on, Jean-Claude, this is an action movie, not *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

If it's a good fight movie you want, check out some old Bruce Lee chopsocky fare or wait for the American release of Jackie Chan's phenomenal *Drunken Master II*. *The Quest*, while beautifully filmed, tries to hard to make a "rite of passage" statement, but its passport should have been revoked. ★★☆☆☆—*Don Butler*

WEAK LINK

DIRECTED BY ANDREW Davis and starring Keanu Reeves, two of Hollywood's biggest heavyweights, *Chain Reaction* (Fox) was lavished with money and attention from the start.

So why doesn't it have any of the intelligence of Davis' *The Fugitive* or any of the thrills of Reeves' *Speed*? You guessed it. The script.

The premise of *Chain Reaction* is intriguing, if only for its creepy plausibility. What if, it asks us, a group of researchers discovered a cheap, limitless, pollution-free energy source, and a secret clique within the government, fearing the results of the sudden scrapping of our petroleum-based economy, murdered the scientists involved—except for a young assistant who slips away just in time?

Reeves plays the grungy assistant on the run. Sporting long, stringy hair and facial stubble, he has abandoned his clean-cut *Speed* persona to return to *Bill and Ted* mode—but the excellent adventure this time out isn't half as believable as his bodacious telephone-booth trek with Alex Winter.

Time and again, this lab nerd comes face-to-face with professional killers, and each time he kicks butt. Not only is he the new Jackie Chan—bustin' heads and snappin' limbs with flying kicks and karate chops—but he apparently has psychic powers that allow him to manipulate time and events to suit his needs. Though he's wanted by every cop in the country, he somehow gets from Wisconsin to Washington D.C. in less than a day to meet with the government agent played by Morgan Freeman. And at a critical juncture in the film, two cops abandon their patrol car just in time for Reeves to sneak into the car and pull up vital information on the dashboard computer. This somehow takes him to a mammoth construction site that contains a tunnel that leads to a super-secret government research lab that is otherwise completely sealed off to intruders. I could go on.

No wonder Reeves would rather play guitar than take on *Speed 2*. ★★☆☆☆—*FN*

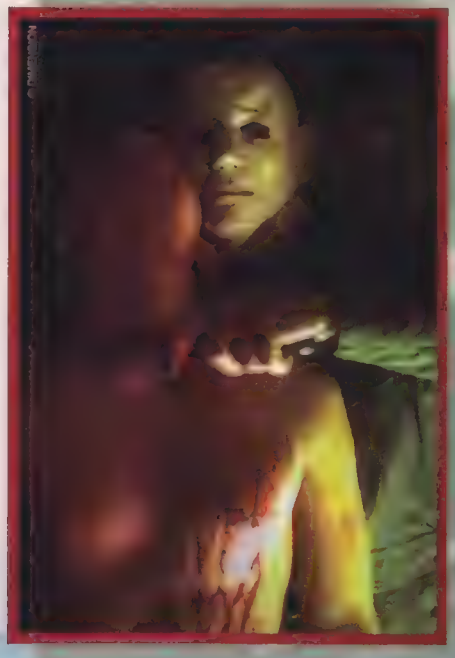
MASKER RAID

IF YOU WEREN'T quite sure whether the Halloween franchise had been run into the ground yet, feel free to check out *Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers* (Dimension). After viewing this debacle, you will be completely convinced that Michael Myers should be deep-sixed forever.

The last time we saw Myers, the masked killer had finally been captured by the authorities, but at the end of the previous *Halloween* film, slash-and-dash Mike was freed from jail by a mysterious, silver-spurred stranger dressed in black.

In this sixth *Halloween* installment, we learn who the man in black was, and we—get ready for this—also learn that Myers has been held captive by a gang of modern-day druids for sinister purposes. These druids—come on, they're everybody's favorite horror-movie villains!—have also kidnapped a young girl, whom they force to bear a child. When the girl escapes with her baby and heads back to to her Midwestern home town, it doesn't take a genius to guess that these robe-wearing guys will send murderous Mike after her.

As luck would have it, the girl phones a call-in radio show and reports that Michael is following her. The ancient Dr. Sam Loomis (Donald Pleasance), Michael's old nemesis, just happens to be listening to the program, so he decides to saddle up once more to do battle with Myers.



Despite its shallow characters and predictable plot, the screenwriter and director did at least try to tie in elements from the original, classic *Halloween* film. One character is supposed to be the grown-up version of one of the kids whom Jamie Lee Curtis babysat in the original film, and much of the story takes place *chez* Myers. These touches, however, can't disguise the fact that this is one horror vehicle that's outlived its prime.

Even poor old Pleasance, who expired during the course of making the film, looks tired of Michael Myers' schtick. Having known about the actor's demise prior to viewing the film, I found it even more excruciating to imagine the misery Pleasance went through to make this half-baked sequel. ★☆☆☆☆—*Frank Kurtz*

CAGED HEAT

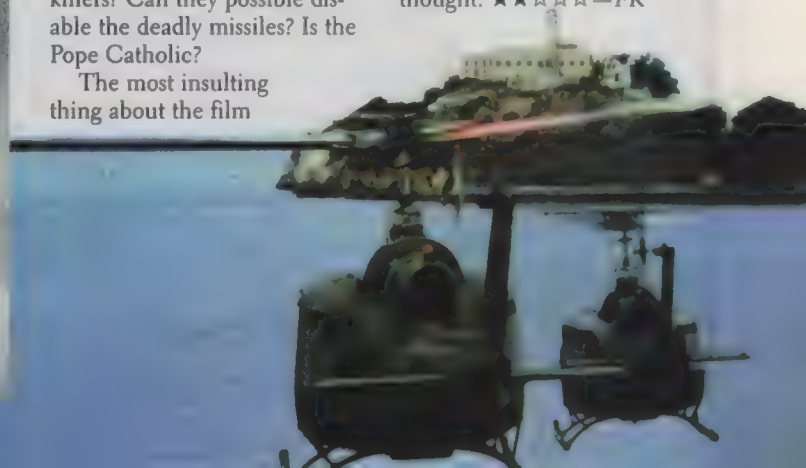
WHAT DO YOU get when you combine the formidable acting talents of Sean Connery, Nicolas Cage and Ed Harris? Given Hollywood's current penchant for lobotomizing scripts, you get a big, predictable mess called *The Rock* (Buena Vista).

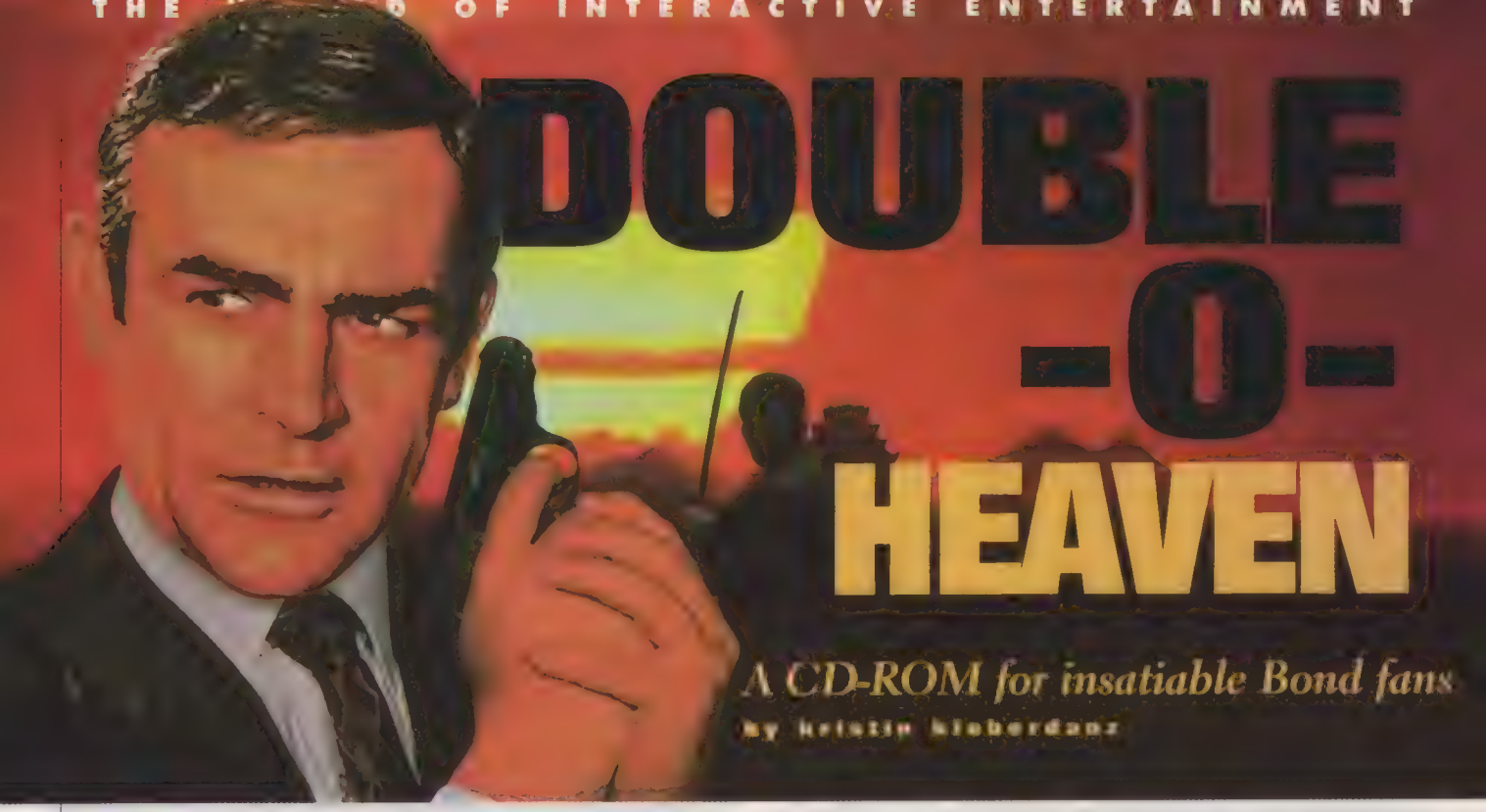
In this action extravaganza, Harris plays a disgruntled Marine general who's tired of sending Marines to die in covert operations. To get the Pentagon's attention, he and a crack group of Marines steal a whole load of deadly nerve gas, head for Alcatraz (you know, the Rock) and threaten to send missiles loaded with the killer gas over Frisco. His demands? Safe passage out of the country, and a large sum of cash, most of which will go to the families of soldiers who fell in covert combat.

The oh-so-predictable reaction of the authorities is that *these men must be stopped!* The FBI sends in its own team of experts, led a Beatles-loving Bureau desk jockey (Cage) and a grizzled political prisoner who's the only man to ever successfully escape from the Rock (Connery). Will these two men be able to stop a crack battalion of Marine killers? Can they possible disable the deadly missiles? Is the Pope Catholic?

The most insulting thing about the film is the way it assumes that the viewer has had part of his or her brain removed. For example, the FBI director and one of his buddies discuss Connery's character, rattling off things they know about the guy for the sole reason of informing the audience about his history. The scene not only stops the film cold, but it's also stilted and seems entirely false. Given a more thoughtful, subtle script, such mindless exposition would be unnecessary. Likewise, most of the film's characters appear to have been ordered from Stereotypes-R-Us, including the film's grumpy FBI authority figures.

Like *Bad Boys* (a product of the same team who made this film), the whole thing is so entrenched in action film clichés that there's no room for surprises. *The Rock* all high concept with very little thought. ★★☆☆☆—*FK*





DOUBLE -O- HEAVEN

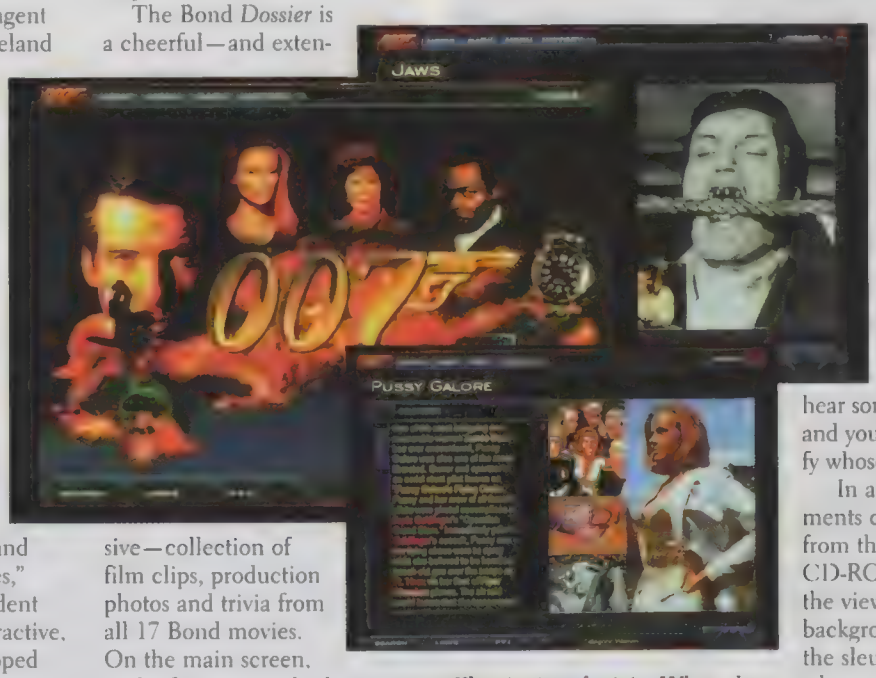
A CD-ROM for insatiable Bond fans

by Kristin Kieberdanz

James Bond is one of a few characters in cinematic history who's managed to successfully reinvent himself over the years, continuing to enchant each new generation of moviegoers. The classy secret agent first sauntered into movieland 35 years ago in *Dr. No*, and the folks at MGM Interactive have decided it's high time to collect Bond's many exploits, gadgets and conquests in a high-tech, multimedia format that would make 007 proud.

"Our goal with [*The Ultimate James Bond: An Interactive Dossier*] was to break new ground in terms of what an infotainment piece can [have] in terms of entertainment and informational capabilities," says Steven Baum, president and CEO of Micro Interactive, the company that developed the double CD-ROM set. "[We wanted] to make it fun to use and allow you to immerse yourself as a spy or a James Bond-like character as you view all the materials. The goal was to design an interactive piece that [resembles] a device James Bond himself might actually use."

The Bond *Dossier* is a cheerful—and extensive—collection of film clips, production photos and trivia from all 17 Bond movies. On the main screen, as the five actors who have played Bond over the years flash before your eyes, there are a number of different subjects that the viewer can explore: missions, allies, villains, vehicles, Q branch (gadgets and weapons), women, 007 phenomenon (profiles of the Bond actors and author Ian Fleming) and trivia. When the viewer clicks on the "women" icon, for example, a list of every female that appeared in the Bonds films appears on the screen. Clicking on a character's name produces a film clip of that woman, as well as a written synopsis of the role she played in Bond's adventures.



In the trivia section, "there are a lot of multimedia clues" that make it highly interactive, according to Mike Guttentag, MGM Interactive's director of production. "You hear five seconds of a song and you have to identify what movie that song was from, or you hear someone's voice and you have to identify whose voice it was."

In addition to segments drawn directly from the Bond films, the CD-ROM also presents the viewer with extensive background information about the sleuth. "There's a section where we show the reviews of each film as they were presented in *The New York Times* or

the *L.A. Times* at the time of the film's release," Steven Baum says. "We detail the box office results, and we also show what was going on in the world at the time, because that had a lot of impact as to what the scripts were all about."

Compiling this amount of intricate detail for each of the 17 movies took a lot of research, so Micro Interactive hired two James Bond experts to work on the project and sort out all the information.

"A lot of upfront design work went into [this project]," Baum adds. "Because the amount of information is massive [with] 17 films—it's really about 35 years of history, and there are all different kinds of little stories from each movie. This is really the first comprehensive product on the subject of Bond, so we really wanted to be sure that anyone who saw it was aware that we had done a thorough job with the material."

Both Guttentag and Baum stress that this James Bond compilation is meant for Bond fans of all genders and generations, just as the films themselves appeal to a broad range of moviegoers.

"This is sort of a new way of looking at films," Guttentag says. "In some ways, it is a new way to present a film by presenting all the different aspects of the film in one place. You can see the story of all the different people who were involved, and I think that is the unique aspect of a CD-ROM treatment; and then it goes to the next step and is entertaining. That was our goal—to really make it entertaining in and of itself." ◆

They Surf By Night
THE FLESH EATERS
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THE HUMANOIDS
EASTMAN COLOR
ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS
NOT OF THIS EARTH
GARLAND · Morgan JONES

Classic sci-fi films like the ones described in this issue's cover story are pretty easy to locate, but cult favorites might not be so easy to come by at your local video store. For that reason, we've compiled the following list of stellar sci-fi film sites that contain background information on weird outer space fare, and also give you the lowdown on where to find and even buy these fringe features, classic titles and just plain kooky films.

If you're having trouble finding *The Frozen Dead* or *Attack of the Crab Monsters* at Blockbuster, The Cult Movie Arcade is the place to shop. This site provides a synopses and release dates for about 46 oddball films as well as an address and phone number you can use to order the movies. Even if you're not a collector looking to buy these films, the titles themselves are entertaining.

There are more goofy movies (52, in fact) for sale at Ronnie Cramer's Cult Film Page. *Mars Needs Women, Nude In His Pocket* and Roger Corman goodies like *The Wasp Woman* and *Battle Beyond the Sun* top Cramer's informative list.

The Science Fiction Gallery describes how science fiction has evolved through history. There are ten categories—Japanese animation and monster movies, for example—in addition to extensive reviews and analysis of each film listed.

UC Berkeley Film Studies Science Fiction page is chock full of great information and links on old and new sci-fi movies—particularly *Blade Runner, Star Trek, Alien* and *Star Wars.*

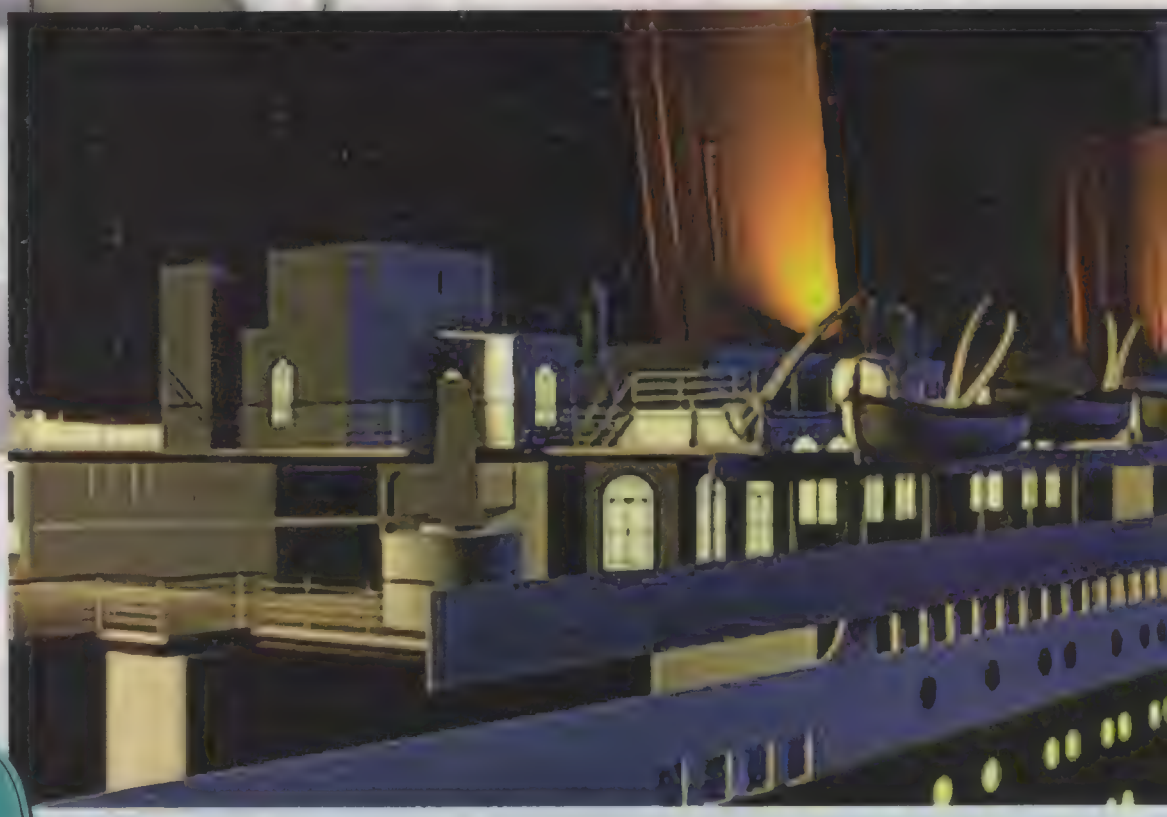
Not the most informative sci-fi movie page, but webmaster Zeta Tanuki provides tons of links to other cool movie sites.

Jordan's Time Killing Sci-Fi Web page contains lots of links, the most notable regarding *Star Wars, Star Trek* and the like.

The Sci-Fi Dome (Dr.Gamer's Sci-Fi Home Page) contains lots of information on old and new sci-fi cinema and TV, video gaming and short stories, and it also provides the obligatory links.

This site has info on sci-fi cinema, authors and TV movies.—*KK*

Sink or Swim

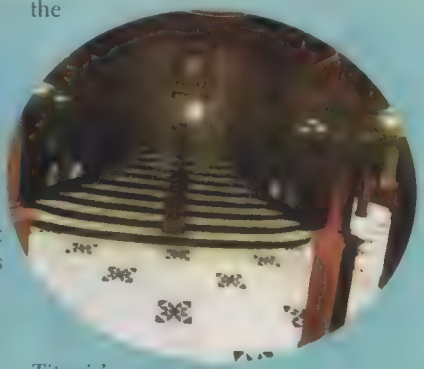


With interest in the *Titanic* booming lately—both a TV miniseries and a big-budget adventure film on the doomed ship are currently in production—it's no surprise that CD-ROM developers have jumped at the chance to give armchair historians the opportunity to wander the grand halls of the doomed ocean liner. A new game called *Titanic: Adventure Out of Time* invites the user to board the tragic ship for her maiden voyage, and the experience introduces players to not only the vast staterooms and eclectic passengers aboard the opulent ship, but also draws them into a web of intrigue that must be unraveled by the early morning hours of April 15, 1912—before the ship slips to the bottom of the North Atlantic forever.

The game, which is being co-released by CyberFlix and GTE Entertainment, is an evocative mélange of mystery, drama and historical re-creation. The user assumes the identity of a fictional British secret agent who has been assigned a dangerous mission that could change the course of history. The first section of *Titanic* allows the agent to roam throughout the ship, interact with more than two dozen fictional characters and begin to make sense of the game's complex plot as he or she collects clues.

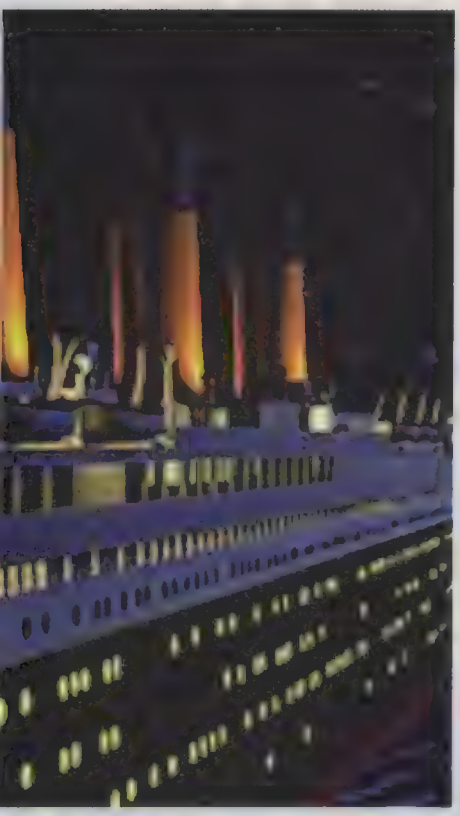
Of course, this is more than just a spy mystery—it's the greatest disaster epic of all time. When the ship hits the infamous iceberg, a timer begins running, and the agent, in the midst of the ensuing panic, must solve the mystery before the ship's tragedy becomes a personal one.

While much of the game is a fictional story, creating the *Titanic* game involved months of painstaking research by CyberFlix artists. They studied the



Titanic's blueprints as well as the plans for her sister ship, the *Olympic*, in an effort to make every detail correct: the frosted glass ceiling, the Turkish bath, the massive grand staircase and even the texture of the the furniture appear as they did on the doomed ocean liner.

The agent encounters characters on the ship who are as fasci-



mood of the period, what the upper class would have listened to and enjoyed. We tried to keep it moody, so the instrumentation and the orchestration is very sparse, so as to not just fill up the speaker with a lot of noise. I took a lot of influence from composers who were popular during 1912, but who were very avant-garde. I took their music and their models and kind of extended them out, and also kind of thinned [the music] out just to make it a little more enjoyable."

The game's producer, Andrew Nelson, says that he thinks *Titanic: Adventure Out of Time* will draw the traditional gaming audience as well as people who are interested in the historical and dramatic aspects of the famous ship's history.

"We're trying to break away from the old repetitious model of aliens attacking you and you [squashing] them," Nelson says. "It's important for the industry to have characters you care about—characters who have motivations beyond the primal ones."

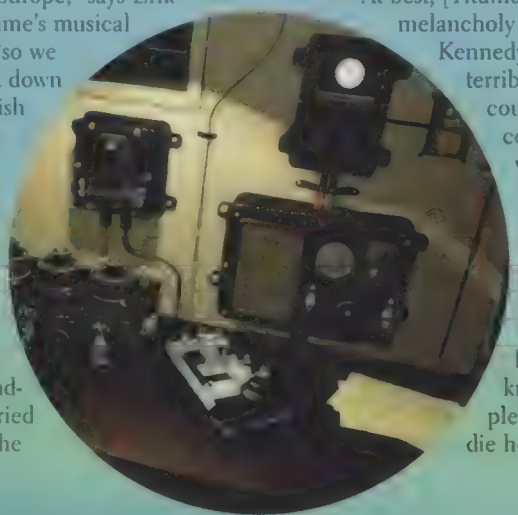
There is no getting around the fact that the fate of the *Titanic* is a disastrous one, and the creators of this game do not try to diminish the horror of the event. The characters seem so real that the player cannot help but feel a twinge of horror at their collective demise. Adding to the somber mood, the music is laced with sadness and even the settings seem dark, which, according to art director Michael Kennedy, is exactly how the game is supposed to look.

"At best, [*Titanic*] was a really melancholy endeavor," Kennedy says. "It was terribly tragic, of course, so you certainly don't want beautiful shades of yellow and the sun brightly streaming in through the windows, because we all know that people are going to die here."—KK

nating and complex as their luxurious surroundings. Among the more than 25 fictional characters the agent interacts with in the course of the game are an aristocratic young lady named Georgia who hands over her diamonds; a Serbian stowaway who is a member of the Black Hand (a Serbian independence group); and a mysterious German military attaché.

"We had a lot of accents and different characters on the ship who were from Europe," says Erik Holt, the game's musical composer. "so we had to track down a lot of British natives and people who could do excellent British accents."

Holt explains that for the game's soundtrack, "we tried to capture the



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State of the Art

Syndicated television goes high-tech in the new action-adventure series F/X

by edward gross

Syndication is becoming an increasingly crowded suburb of TVland—once a few high-quality tenants moved in (the *Star Trek* franchise, *Hercules*, *Babylon 5*), a syndication boom followed. This increased attention on the syndication market hardly promises quality programming, but at least the odds are better, and one of the most promising of the new wave of syndicated television series is *F/X*.

Based on the two feature films starring Brian Dennehy and Bryan Brown, *F/X* is a cross between *Hill Street Blues* and *Mission: Impossible*. In it, New York detective Leo McCarthy (Kevin Dobson) and movie special-effects maestro Rollie Tyler (Cameron Daddo) are two friends in an unlikely partnership, in which each uses the tools of their respective trades to solve some of the most compelling crimes in the Big Apple. According to executive producer Steven Downing, the difference between the movies and the series can be found in the relationship between Leo and Rollie.

"If you go back to the original feature," says Downing, who produced the long-running hit *MacGyver*, "you'll see that the cop and the FX guy never really cross paths. They were not friends, they didn't work together. The first half of the movie was the effects guy getting in trouble, and the second half of the movie was the cop tracking down the crime. The basic core of the series that I thought would work is that the cop lives in a bureaucratic world that's under-equipped and under-financed, but he's a good, hard-charging street cop who happens to have a friend in the movie business who's a great illusionist. His friend is also his secret weapon to help him solve crimes, because he not only has the expertise but he also has a lot of good equipment. What I'm trying to do is bring in the action-adventure audience, and then start testing who our characters are, eventually leading to full-blown characterizations. The relationships are the key to the show."

Dobson, a TV veteran of series such as *Kojak* and *Knots Landing*, is impressed with *F/X*'s emphasis on character and strong stories. "I keep waiting for the other shoe to fall," he laughs, "but the quality has been main-

tained throughout [the season's] filming. The character growth has been nice, too. In a new show, they write the characters, block them out and set up the Bible. The producers and writers write what they envision the characters to be, but that gradually starts to evolve. I remember telling Cameron and the other cast members, 'Don't get frustrated about not getting enough to do, that will all change.' Suddenly the characters are up and breathing and moving. Now the actors and the characters are melding, and the relationship between Leo and Rollie is getting more to the point where you can really understand what these two guys are all about."

"What Kevin and I have brought to the show is our own dimension," adds the Australian-born Daddo, whose television credits include *Models, Inc.* "They had written several scripts before we even started working, but now they're seeing how Kevin and I work together, and they're giving us the space to create moments of character."

Daddo is not only pleased with the writing, he actually digs the FX. "I'm into the technology of the show," he says. "I love the stunts and

blowing things up, and I love seeing what goes on behind the camera. I also love that my character's thing is to make his effect, his illusion, become reality and make it work in reality."

Most television series—even the wildly successful ones like *The Next Generation*—have had to scrimp on visual effects and location work, relying instead on static sets. Not so for *F/X*, says Daddo.

"I saw a lot of the summer action flicks—*Eraser*, *Mission: Impossible*, *The Rock*—and we're doing that stuff *every week*," the actor enthuses. "I don't think you can find [production] quality like this anywhere else on TV."

So how do they manage to create all those complex, expensive effects week in and week out? Producer Downing credits the executives at Rysher Entertainment. "It's how the executive suite deals with you that makes a difference," he says. "I've been in situations in the past where everybody in the executive suite has an idea and everybody wants their idea to be used. So the real creative people responsible for doing the show have to take all of these camel humps and make them work on a horse. That is definitely not the case on this show." ◆

TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

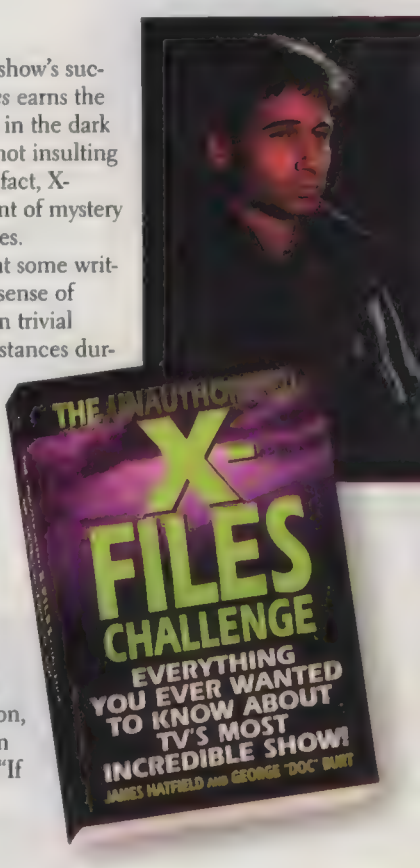
The X-Files *stylishly explores the unknown, but two new books drown X-Philes in details*

by frieda neone

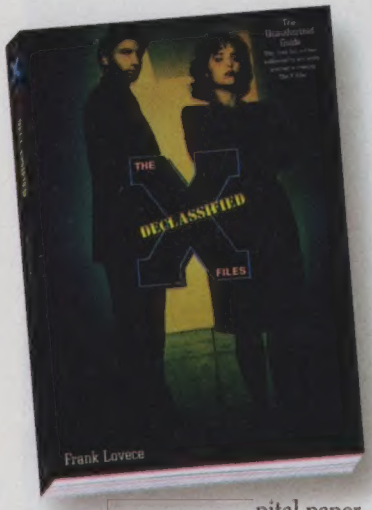
If you've ever wondered what separates fandom from obsession, two new *X-Files* tomes offer, if you'll pardon the pun, textbook examples of the latter.

Each week on the hit Fox show, FBI agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully explore odd, baffling and downright surreal phenomena. That premise, in the hands of the average TV producer, might have become *MacGyver* with aliens, but creator Chris Carter knows that to sustain dramatic tension—and the viewers' interest—he can't give away all the answers. Mulder and Scully often end up just as confused at the end of an episode as they were at the beginning. The key to the show's success is that *The X-Files* earns the right to leave viewers in the dark some of the time by not insulting their intelligence. In fact, X-Philes *like* the element of mystery that pervades the series.

So it's a shame that some writers want to ruin that sense of magic by obsessing on trivial details. "In several instances during [the episode 'Shadows'], the vehicles that appear onscreen obviously have no license plates, or at least the numbers have been blacked out," carp James Hatfield and George Burt, the authors of *The Unauthorized X-Files Challenge* (Kensington, $14.00). Elsewhere in their book, they ask, "If


THE UNAUTHORIZED
X-FILES
CHALLENGE
EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT TV'S MOST INCREDIBLE SHOW!
JAMES HATFIELD AND GEORGE "DOC" BURT

Jack Willis [of 'Lazarus'] was diabetic, then why did it take so long for him to go into a coma without insulin?" Then there's my personal favorite nitpick: "Mulder's signature on the hospital paperwork [in 'One Breath'] is not the same handwriting as on his photo ID shown in the credit sequence at the beginning." Hey, I've got a question for you—*who cares?* I love *The X-Files*, but the thought of taking quizzes on various characters' birth dates and middle names—which is, after all, the premise of this book—strikes me as,



well, kind of pointless.

More disturbing than the authors' belief that there's no such thing as too much trivia are their wholesale appropriations of quotes from this magazine. Each episode entry in their book contains a summary, various trivia questions and behind-the-scenes information about the making of the show, and often the quotes contained in that last section have been lifted wholesale from *CINESCAPE*'s pages. There's nothing wrong with using material from other sources, as long as it's done judiciously and with proper attribution. Apparently that's one fact that escaped Hatfield and Burt's attention.

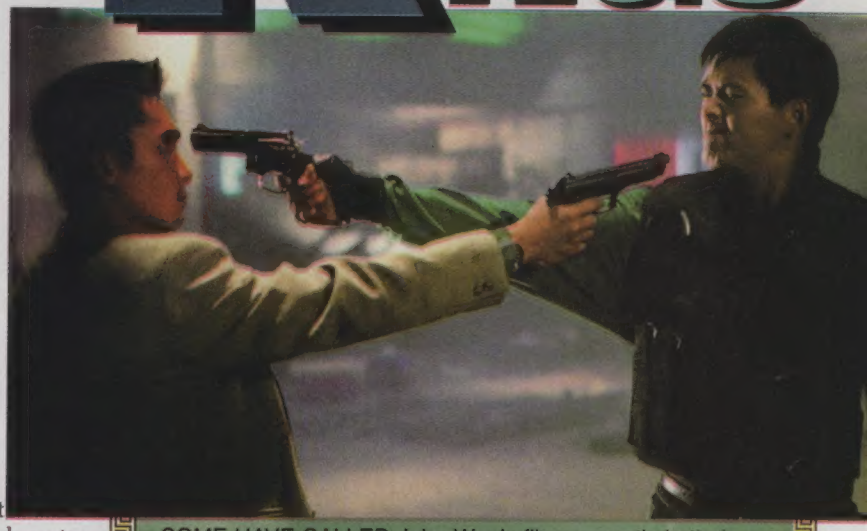
Frank Lovece's *The Declassified X-Files* (Citadel, $17.95) is a better-written effort, but it's basically a rehash of information that X-Philes have already read a million times. Yes, I know that Gillian Anderson briefly worked as a waitress in New York. No, I did not know that in "Duane Barry," her character paid a $11.14 supermarket tab with a check. Did I want to? No.

Most of Lovece's book is taken up with a lengthy episode guide, and instead of filling it with new information or insights, most of it consists of plot descriptions that go on for pages. If you've seen the episodes in question—and if you're an X-Phile, you most certainly have—what's the point of reading someone else's rehash of each show's plot? Especially since anyone with a modem can surf dozens of websites that offer similar information for free.

Perusing this X-plosion of minutiae produces the impression that the authors of these books have somehow missed the point of the show. Divinity is sometimes in the details, but by bypassing the big picture, they trivialize what's important about *The X-Files*—good writing, interesting characters and, most of all, a sense of mystery.

I'm reminded of the famous *Saturday Night Live Star Trek* convention skit, in which William Shatner is peppered with trivial questions about the show. "Get lives!" he urged the conventioneers. That's another way of saying, "Thanks for your interest, but it's only TV." ◆

KONG KINGS

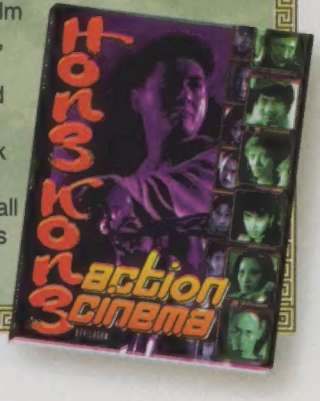


SOME HAVE CALLED John Woo's films operatic in their violence, but how many fans of the Hong Kong native's films know that the traditions of Chinese opera *did* actually influence his cinematic style? The excellent *Hong Kong Action Cinema* (The Overlook Press, $21.95) by Bey Logan offers just such interesting tidbits, as well as a comprehensive look at every important actor and director to emerge from the British colony.

Bey, the editor of *Combat* and *Impact* action-cinema magazines, delineates clearly and cleanly how martial arts filtered into the Hong Kong films of the post-war era. Out-of-work members of waning opera troupes, it seems, began getting work in the nation's nascent film community, where their grueling physical training and knowledge of different modes of fighting made them the ideal stars of the heroic tales of revenge that appealed to the Chinese filmgoing public. For those who cringe at the thought of yet another *Lethal Weapon* movie, Bey describes the history of a popular serial that began around that time—the star of the Wong Fei Hung films made 99 features in the role.

After providing this entertaining historical context, Bey moves into the modern era, providing a thorough and compelling account of the Bruce Lee phenomena as well as a description of the emergence of current Hong Kong stars like Woo, Chow Yun-Fat and Michelle Khan. Various chapters cover everything from comedy to ghost stories to "fighting females," and the book is loaded with movie stills and sidebars on various individuals or film topics (i.e., the ten best gun battles, the coolest "bad girls," etc.).

Though Logan's prose is studded with a few too many exclamation points, the overall quality of his book allows one to forgive his occasional lapses into fanboy mode. It's no small compliment to say that Bey's book is as compelling as its subject.—*FN*



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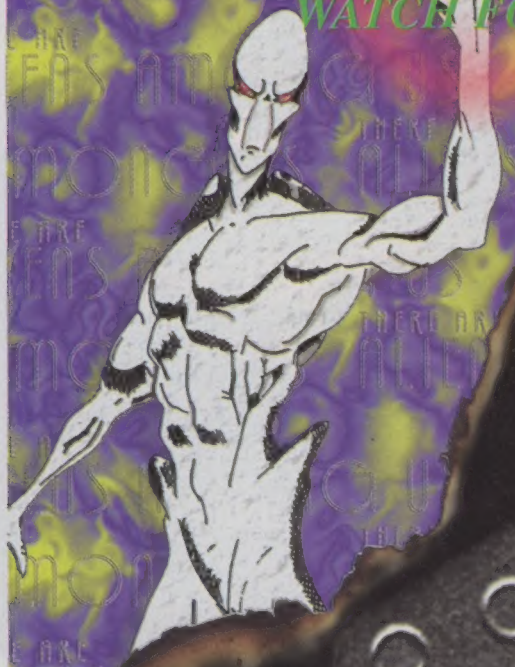

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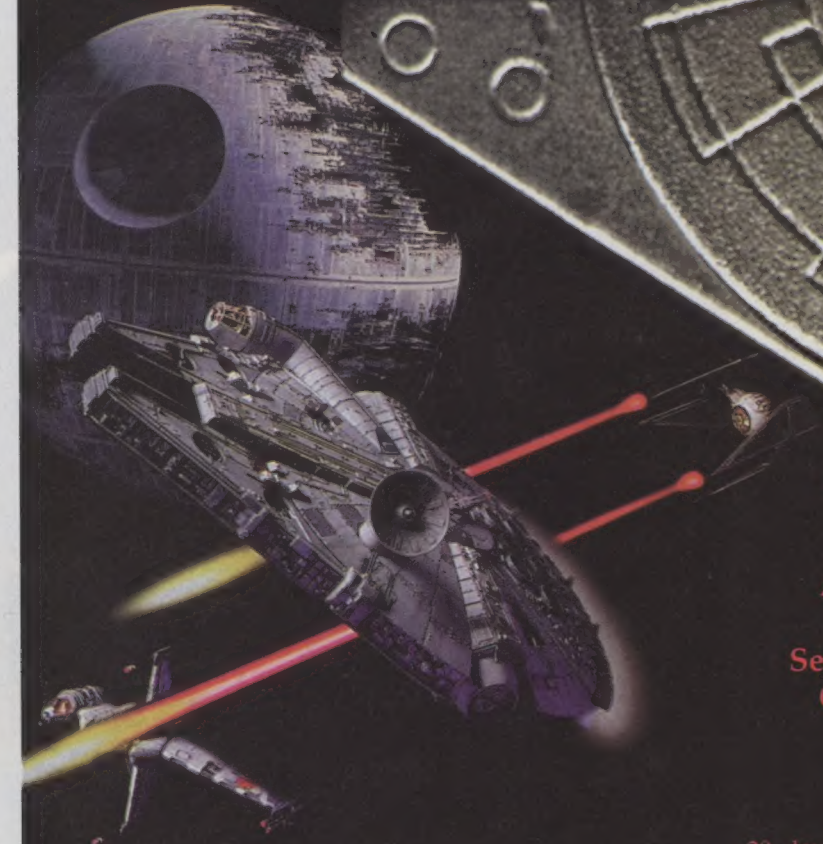

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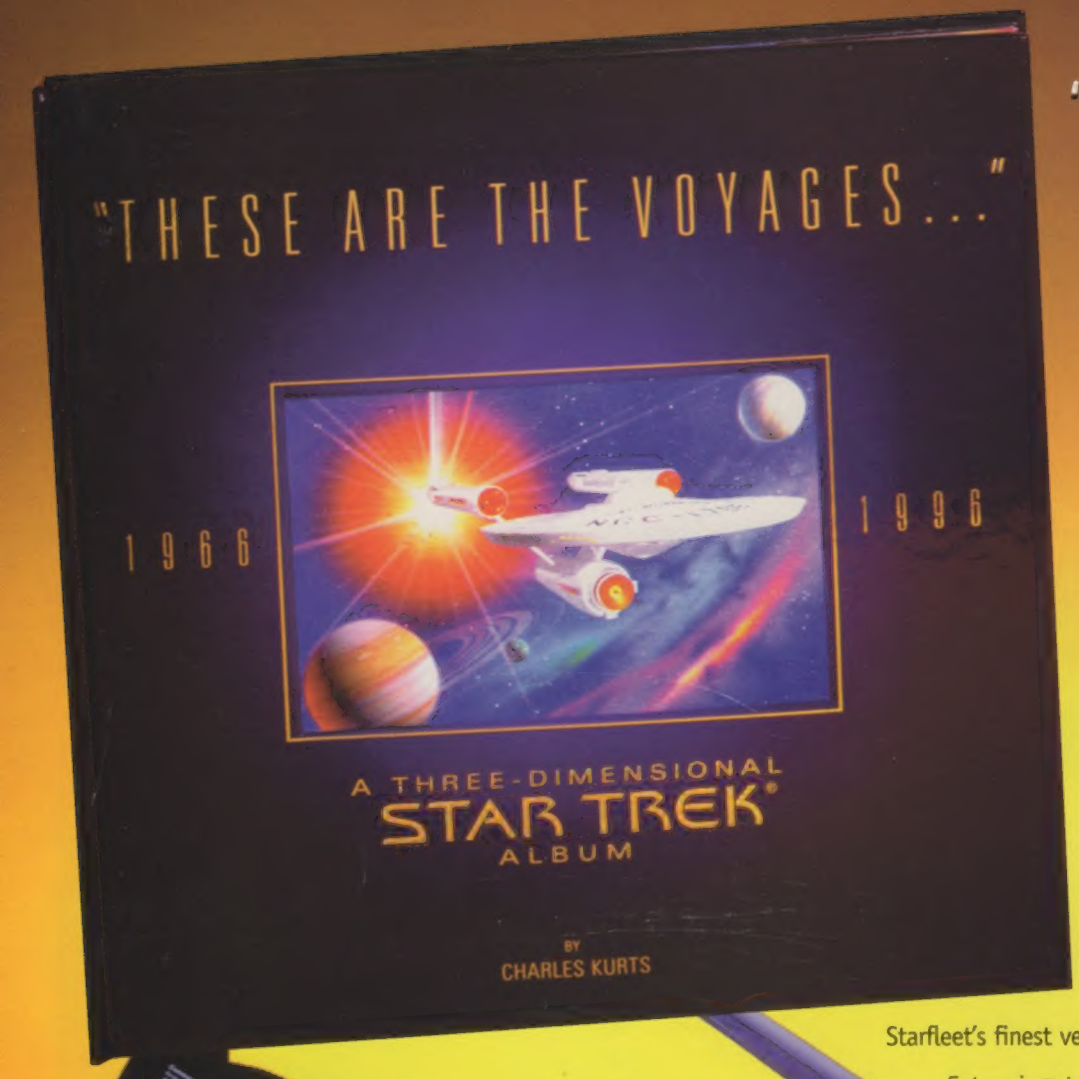

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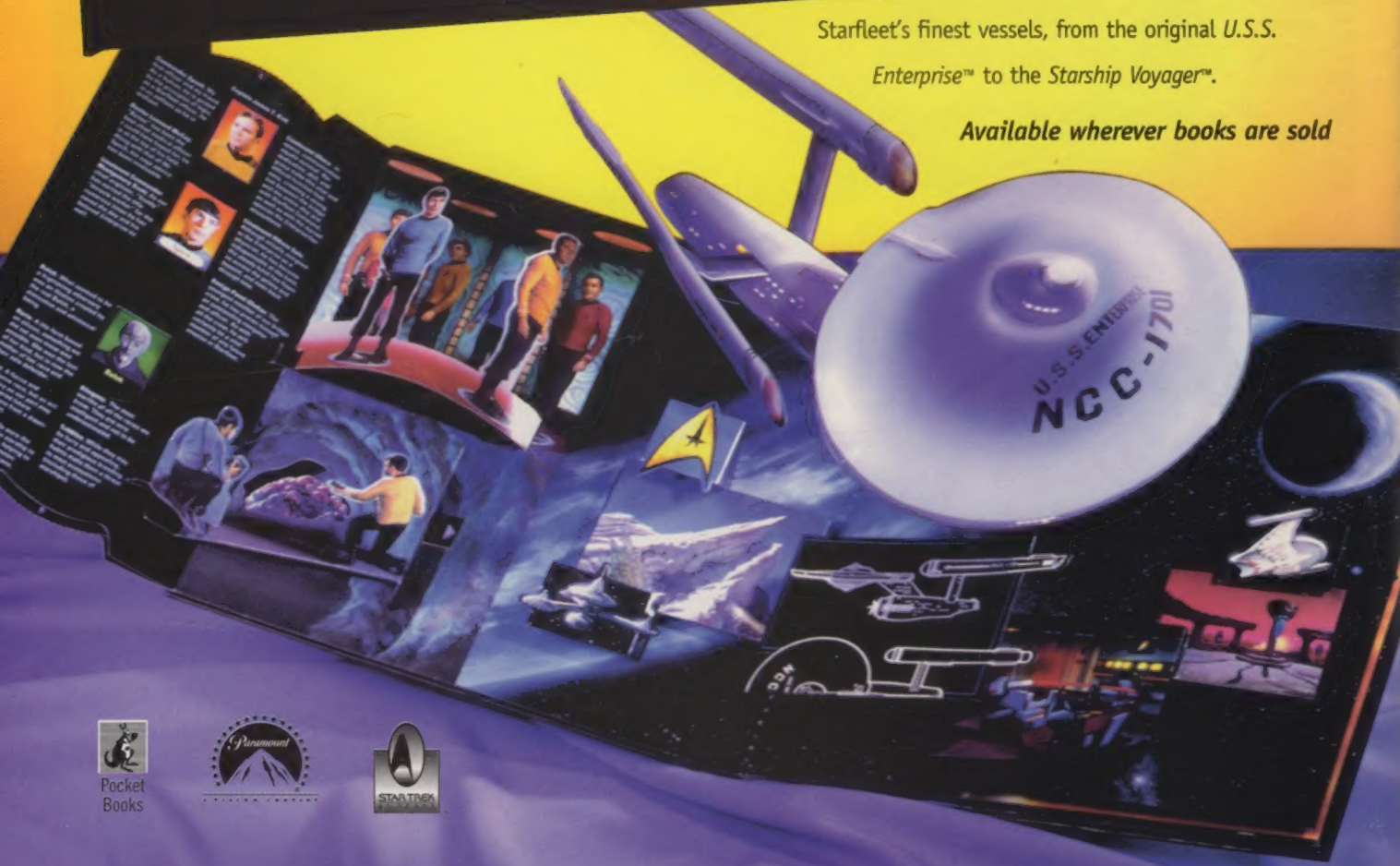

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